



# Research Publication

## Maintaining the Link:

A Survey of visitors to New South  
Wales Correctional Centres

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Research Officer

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**Corrective Services NSW**



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## **A Survey of Visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres**

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Corrective Services NSW**

**April 2012**

***“Prison is not a place you like to visit,  
it is hard enough having a loved one in prison  
let alone feeling like a prisoner when you are visiting...”***  
(anonymous visitor)

***“...all we want is to visit our loved ones  
and be treated fairly”***  
(anonymous visitor)

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## Executive Summary

### ***Background***

Maintaining family ties during imprisonment has been found to serve important functions for inmates, their family members, correctional centre administration, and the community as a whole. A number of criminological theories have been cited to explain the possible reasons for such positive effects of maintaining family contact.

Corrective Services NSW recognises the importance of visits between inmates and their families, and provides contact visiting facilities at each correctional centre in order to assist inmates to maintain family relationships.

In 2010, the Children and Families of Offenders Steering Committee (CFOSC) was established to coordinate policy and project initiatives in relation to contact between offenders and their families. The Committee also monitors the level and quality of service provision to families and children of offenders through these visitation programs and facilities.

The current study, commissioned by the CFOSC, sought to obtain information in relation to the current standard of facilities available to those visiting correctional centres across New South Wales.

During April 2011, visitors to all correctional centres in New South Wales were given the opportunity to respond to a 4-page survey. Visitors were given the option of responding on one of the forms available at the correctional centre, or online.

Two previous correctional centre visitor surveys had been undertaken by Corporate Research, Evaluation and Statistics (CRES) in 1994 and 1999. The findings of these surveys helped to shape policy and procedures in CSNSW to improve the visiting experience for both offenders and their families.

### ***Response Rate***

Of the 6470 survey forms provided to correctional centres, 500 questionnaires were returned completed. An additional 106 visitors chose to complete their survey online. Thus, a total of 606 surveys were included in the study. The number of responses received from each correctional centre varied from 0 to 53.

When considering that approximately 17,000 individuals visited an offender, at least once, during the evaluation period, and all were given the opportunity to respond, this provides a response rate of closer to 3.56%.

While the response rate was low in research terms, it should be acknowledged that the comments and concerns of over 600 visitors to NSW correctional centres have been outlined in this report, and that it is essential that any one of their opinions in relation to their visiting experience be considered.

### ***Key Findings***

While the current study is similar in nature to those carried out in 1994 and 1999, it should be noted that differences in methodology make it difficult to compare the current findings with the earlier findings. Due to the voluntary nature of the survey, it is not possible to say if any of the three studies obtained a representative sample of visitors.



### Profile of Respondents

- 74% were female.
- Age ranged from 9 to 86 years, with the average age being 43 years.
- 77% reported that they were born in Australia, 4% reported being born in the United Kingdom, 3% in Europe, 10% unknown.
- 11% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (9% did not respond to this question).
- 34% reported that they were caring for one or more child.

When asked about their relationship with the offender they were visiting, 23% reported visiting their 'son or daughter', 19% reported visiting their 'husband or de facto', 8% selected 'other' when describing the nature of their relationship with the prisoner they were visiting. Other relationships included; cousins, grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and in-laws. Six percent did not to disclose the nature of their relationship with the prisoner they were visiting

The most common reasons for visiting included; to stay in touch/maintain relationship, to keep the family together/children, and for companionship. 'Other' reasons included; to provide moral support, because they love the prisoner, to assist in re-socialisation, and to plan for the prisoner's release.

### Views and opinions

Overall, the majority of respondents (49%) rated their visiting experience as 'satisfactory' or 'good'. Fifteen percent of respondents rated their experience as 'not good'.

A variety of both positive and negative comments in relation to respondents' overall visiting experience were received. The seven key areas of concern that were identified by visitors included:

- travel distance and costs;
- visiting days and hours;
- waiting and processing time;
- facilities in the visiting areas;
- facilities for children;
- reliable and consistent information; and
- treatment by staff.

### *Travel distance and cost*

Travel distance and cost was the most common 'problem' cited by respondents to the current survey with 42% of respondents referring to these as 'often' or 'always' a problem for them. Comments indicate that the majority of those who regard this as an issue are those travelling to regional correctional centres.

The most common form of transport reported to be used by visitors to attend visits was their own car/bike (80%). A further 5% of respondents reported getting a lift to the correctional centre with friends, while 4% reported catching public transport.

Travelling time ranged from 2 minutes to 30 hours, with the most frequent travel time reported by respondents being 2 hours.

Only 14% of respondents reported that they were aware of the Travel and Accommodation Assistance scheme for visitors to prison.

#### *Visiting days and hours*

The majority of respondents (54%) advised that they visited the inmate, on average, at least once a week. When asked how long the visitor had been visiting the prisoner in custody, responses ranged from 1 to 6209 days (17 years). The most frequent response was 1 year.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported limited visiting days and hours as 'often' or 'always' a problem when visiting, with the overarching suggestion from respondents being to facilitate visiting "7 days per week" or at least allow some flexibility in visiting times.

#### *Waiting and processing time*

Waiting time and processing time was the third most commonly cited issue encountered during visits, with 34% of respondents stating that this was 'often' or 'always' a problem.

Three-quarters of respondents stated that they usually arrived at the correctional centre before scheduled visiting hours (average reported arrival time was 32 minutes prior). All responses regarding the reason for arriving early related to maximising the visiting time (e.g. to facilitate processing, avoid queues, allow travelling time, and get a longer visit).

The average time respondents reported having to wait before seeing the prisoner once visiting hours had started was 27 minutes. Five respondents, however, reported waiting between 2 to 3 hours for their visit to commence.

While the majority of respondents reported having "no" problems with any of the security measures, a number did complain about malfunctions with detection units delaying the commencement of their visits. Further delays, which were identified during the security processing of visitors, occur as a result of the lack of networking in required information technology. Firstly, the Offender Integrated Management System (OIMS) and Biometric Identification Device (BID) are not linked. This results in the processing officer having to verify the visitor's identity on both systems independently. Secondly, the BIDs for each correctional centre are not networked throughout NSW, requiring visitors to have their fingerprints and images captured and recorded independently at each centre they visit.

#### *Facilities in the visiting areas*

Overall the rating of facilities in visiting areas was generally positive.

Lockers and car parking received the highest rating with 59% and 45% of respondents respectively rating these facilities as 'good' or 'excellent'. Similarly, a greater proportion of respondents rated both the temperature, space, disabled access, waiting areas as 'good' or 'excellent' compared to those who gave a rating of 'poor' or 'non-existent'.

Sheltered outdoor space received the poorest response with 40% of respondents rating this as 'non-existent' or 'poor'. Other facilities causing concern included;

- drink/food machine and tea/coffee facilities (31% rated as 'poor' or 'non-existent'),
- furniture (30% rated as 'poor' or 'non-existent'), and
- toilets (28% rated as 'poor' or 'non-existent').

The majority of comments about the drink/food machines related to the limited selection of food and drink available, in particular, the lack of healthy options. Similarly, comments in relation to tea and coffee facilities referred to the poor availability.

In relation to the furniture in the visiting area, respondents' comments primarily focussed on the lack of availability and poor comfort of seating. Comments about the toilets in the visiting area referred to issues of poor hygiene and availability or access.

#### *Facilities for children*

While 37% of respondents reported that they brought children to visits, 46% stated that the facilities for children at the prison were 'fair', 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Of the 26% who thought the facilities to be 'poor' or 'non-existent', the main area of concern was that there was nothing suitable to occupy the children while they were waiting and nowhere for them to play once they went into a visit.

#### *Reliable and consistent information*

Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported that visitor information was 'poor' or 'non-existent'. More specifically, respondents commented on the lack of information for new visitors in relation to the visiting process and the inconsistencies in, and currency of, available information.

Thirty-four percent visitors reported having seen a copy of the "Visiting a Correctional Centre" handbook, and 26% reported that it was 'helpful'. As with the visitor information generally, the main concern raised about the handbook related to its generic nature. Visitors suggested that each correctional centre should have their own section in the Visiting Handbook, outlining location specific visiting times, procedures, and permitted items.

#### *Treatment of visitors by staff*

Sixty-eight percent reported to be 'often' or 'always' treated politely by Corrective Services staff when they visit the prison. Unfortunately, a further sixty-two visitors (10%) reported that they were 'rarely' or 'never' treated politely by staff when they visit the prison.

Similarly, while 53% of respondents cited treatment by officers as 'never' or 'rarely' a problem they encountered when visiting a correctional centre, over 30% of other reported it to be a problem 'sometimes', 'often', or 'always'. These results suggest that, while a good proportion of CSNSW staff are consistently adhering to the CSNSW Visitors Customer Service Charter, there are still a small number who may not be.

### **Cautionary Note**

Due to the low response rate, caution should be exercised in the interpretation and application of the results of this study. As the survey was made available to any visitor, respondents' self-selection may have resulted in skewed findings (for example, it may be that only those visitors with extreme views made the effort to provide comments, resulting in an overall negative or positive set of responses). Furthermore, due to the written nature of the survey, visitors with English as a second language, or literacy issues, may have been deterred from completing a survey.

It should further be noted that findings have been reported collectively, providing a general overview of the level of satisfaction of visitors to correctional centres across NSW. They do not identify satisfaction levels or concerns relating to any particular centre.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to improve the provision of service delivery to visitors of inmates in correctional centres across New South Wales.

### 1. Accountability

- 1.1. Key performance measures to be incorporated into General Manager's performance agreement in order to ensure accountability for service provision and adherence to guidelines and service charter.
- 1.2. The Manager of Services and Programs within each correctional centre should be given more responsibility to ensure the visiting section in their centre is managed in accordance with policy and procedures.

### 2. Children of Visitors

- 2.1. Where financial resources permit, considerations should be given to the provision of play areas (indoors and/or outdoors) for children of visitors.
- 2.2. Activities should be made available to occupy children while in the waiting area (e.g. children's DVDs, books, etc.).

### 3. Facilities

- 3.1. Vending machines should incorporate healthy options of food and drink.
- 3.2. General Managers should maintain a record of expenditure of monies earned through vending machines in the visits area to improve the facilities in the area.
- 3.3. Toilets should be made available for visitors (and their children) to use during visits, without having to terminate their visit.
- 3.4. Maintenance and cleanliness of the toilet and other facilities within the visiting section of correctional centres should be incorporated into the General Managers' performance agreement in order to ensure adherence to minimum hygiene standards.

### 4. Visiting Procedures

- 4.1. Duties should be separated with civilian staff processing visitors, in particular in centres with a high number of visitors, and correctional staff conducting security checks.
- 4.2. A dedicated processing line for new (first time) visitors should be allocated in order to provide information on the process (induction) and set up VIN and biometric identification without delaying the processing of regular visitors.

### 5. Information Technology

- 5.1. Link Biometric Identification Device (BID) and Offender Integrated Management System (OIMS).
- 5.2. Network Biometric Identification Devices (BID) statewide.

**6. Staff Training**

- 6.1. All staff should complete customer service training as part of their induction program, with a refresher prior to being rostered in the visiting area.

**7. Provision of Information**

- 7.1. Visitor liaison or customer service officer should be available, in correctional centre waiting areas where numbers are large, in order to assist new visitors and explain processes or offer information to reduce anxiety while waiting for the visit.
- 7.2. Each correctional centre should develop their own information pamphlet for inclusion in the Visiting Handbook, outlining location specific visiting times, procedures, permitted items, etc.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

“It is an established fact that helping offenders maintain relationships with families and friends can contribute to their successful integration into community life” (Corrective Services NSW, 2010a, p.2). In order to facilitate contact and maintain such relationships, Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) provides a number of services for families of offenders in custody, including; visits facilities, parenting and other family-related programs, and travel and accommodation assistance. It should be recognised, however, that such support for family relationships must be balanced with the need for safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people, other family members and the community at large. As a result, accommodating visits by members of the public, places increased demands on CSNSW’s security, economic and human resources.

According to the Annual Report (Corrective Services NSW, 2010b), 214,746 visits were processed from family and friends of offenders between July 2009 and June 2010. Unfortunately, however, the most common written complaint received by the Minister and Commissioner of Corrective Services during this period was about visits.

In 2010, the Children and Families of Offenders Steering Committee (CFOSC) was established to coordinate policy and project initiatives in relation to contact between offenders and their families. The Committee, which includes representatives of community agencies with a particular interest in the well-being of families and children of offenders, also monitors the level and quality of service provision to families and children of offenders.

The current study, commissioned by the CFOSC, sought to obtain information in relation to the current standard of facilities available to those visiting correctional centres across New South Wales.

Two previous correctional centre visitor surveys had been undertaken by Corporate Research, Evaluation and Statistics (CRES) in 1994<sup>1</sup> and 1999<sup>2</sup>. The findings of these surveys helped to shape policy and procedures in CSNSW to improve the visiting experience for both offenders and their families. These surveys also assisted in the development of CSNSW security-based technological and infrastructure initiatives to improve the smooth operations of correctional centres across NSW.

### 1.2 The Importance of Visiting

#### 1.2.1 Visiting and the Family

Maintaining family ties during imprisonment serve important functions for both the inmate and their family members. For example, visiting may assist in the preservation of the family unit. As stated by Hairston (1991), “both marital and parental relationships are particularly vulnerable during incarceration” (p.88) as couples are denied the “day-to-day interactions, experiences, and sharing which sustain a marital relationship” (p.89).

Hairston (1991) argues that maintaining family ties, through ongoing communication and visiting during imprisonment, can alleviate some of the distress caused by separation between couples and between incarcerated parents and their children. In particular, she

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<sup>1</sup> Eyland, S. (1996). Inside...Out: A survey of visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres, Research Publication No.36, Sept 1996, CSNSW.

<sup>2</sup> McHutchison, J. (1996). Visiting the Inside: A survey of visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres, Research Publication No.43, May 2000, CSNSW.

states that visiting enables attachments to be maintained and the inmates' roles and responsibilities as parents or partners to be reinforced and continued.

According to Derkzen, Gobeil and Gileno (2009), a number of studies have in fact found that visitation programs assist in keeping marriages intact during incarceration (Hopper, 1989; Rutland, 1995). While such studies have found it difficult to determine "whether visitation is a consequence of pre-existing family stability or whether visitation in and of itself contributes to family stability,...visitation programs play an important role by providing the opportunity to, at the very least, *maintain* family stability while the offender is incarcerated" (Derkzen, Gobeil & Gileno, 2009, p.3).

Maintaining family ties during imprisonment may also enhance the well-being of individual family members. Hairston (1991) cites a number of studies suggesting that, in addition to the inmate's well-being, which will be discussed below, maintaining family ties may enhance the well-being of other family members. For example, Sack (1977) reports that the behaviour of children "improved considerably after they visited their father in prison" (cited in Hairston, 1991, p.95). His explanation for this improvement in behaviour is that the children are worried about their incarcerated parent and feel rejected when they are unable to see them, and that visiting their parent reassures the child that their parent is all right and that he or she still loves them.

Similarly, other family members stress and worry about the prisoner's treatment may be alleviated through communicating with the prisoner directly through visits. Ferraro, Johnson, Gorgensen and Bolton (1983, cited in Hairston, 1991), for example, report that women who saw their imprisoned spouses at least twice a week, did not experience the same level of anxiety and stress as those who had less or no contact.

### **1.2.2 Visiting and the Criminal Justice System**

There are also a number of benefits to be gained by the criminal justice system and the community as a whole if relationships between offenders and their families and friends are maintained and strengthened through visits in custody.

Firstly, similar to the affect of visits on the well-being of others, regular contact with children and family members has been found to decrease stress for inmates. In fact, Hairston (1991) cites several studies suggesting that "the prisoner's mental health is dependent on his contact with the outside world" (p.93). For example, Flanagan (1981) reports that inmates expressed fear that their family and friends would not wait for them to be released; Harrison (1987) notes inmates' concerns over maintaining contact with their children; and Fox (1982) identifies separation and concerns about their children as a common stress experienced by incarcerated women (cited in Hairston, 1991).

The impact of visits on inmate stress levels is likely to further result in better management outcomes for correctional centres with evidence suggesting that "an inmate's connection with the outside, through visitation programs, could greatly reduce inmate tensions and in turn reduce the likelihood of riots, disturbances, and deviant behaviour" (Woolf and Tumin, 1991, cited in Tewksbury & DeMichele, 2005, p.295). For example, Aungles (1994) argues that "grossly inadequate visiting conditions" and "insufficient visits" have been identified as major factors precipitating a number of riots in correctional centres, in particular, the burning down of Bathurst Correctional Centre in 1974. Furthermore, Aungles (1994) cites Porritt (1987) and Gorta and Nguyen (1988) as evidence identifying "worries and inadequate information about the family", which may result from limited or no contact with family members, as "major factors precipitating prison escapes" (p.112).

In most correctional jurisdictions, including NSW, deprivation of contact visits may be enforced as a punishment for a correctional centre offence. As such, contact visits may be viewed as a privilege within the correctional context and can be utilised as a control mechanism to influence levels of institutional misconducts. In fact, Carter (1989, cited in Derkzen, Gobeil & Gileno, 2009) report that 75% of the offenders interviewed “indicated that they attempted to avoid situations which could ultimately jeopardise their visiting privileges” (p.3). Similarly, Hensley, Rutland, Gray-Ray, and Durant (2000, cited in Derkzen, Gobeil & Gileno, 2009) examined the effect of visitation on violent institutional misconducts among Mississippi inmates and found that offenders who had participated in family visits were generally less likely to threaten or commit a violent act while incarcerated relative to inmates who did not participate in visits.

Aungles (1994) highlights the importance of visiting in easing these “tensions inherent in imprisonment...in terms of economic costs and savings to the state” (p.112). She suggests that relieving the anxiety levels of inmates through visitation may result in a reduction of costs to the state. Such costs could include; costs required to refurbish a correctional centre after a riot, costs in police and prison administration, and costs involved in the extension of and inmate’s sentence if further charges are laid as a result of their involvement in a riot, assault, or escape.

A further benefit of maintaining contact between offenders and their families and friends is the likelihood that “the involvement of CSNSW staff in contact with, and service provision to, families and communities might bring to light information important for intelligence which in turn may increase public safety, the safety of staff and inmates which enhances offender management” (Corrective Services NSW, 2010c).

The most commonly cited benefit to be gained from maintaining family ties while in custody is the positive impact on re-offending and parole success.

### **1.2.3 Visiting and Recidivism**

Research has consistently found that inmates who maintain close links with their families and/or friends during imprisonment are more likely to successfully reintegrate into community life on release, resulting in “lower rates of post-release recidivism than inmates who do not maintain these ties” (Indig, Topp, Ross, Mamoon, Border, Kumar & McNamara, 2010, p.39).

According to Visher and Travis (2003), the earliest study of the relationship between family ties and post-prison success was conducted by Lloyd Ohlin in 1954. Ohlin compared the number of visits and number of visitors for a sample of 17,000 male offenders released from Illinois state prisons between 1925 and 1935 and found that “inmates who were classified as maintaining active family interest were successful on parole, whereas those who were classified as loners experienced significantly lower rates of parole success” (Visher & Travis, 2003, p. 99).

Since this early study, this association between family contact during incarceration and lower recidivism rates has consistently been reported. For example, Glaser (1964, cited in Derkzen, Gobeil & Gileno, 2009) reported a 74% rate of parole success for visited inmates in comparison to 43% for those offenders without regular visits. Holt and Miller (1972, cited in Hairston, 1991) conducted a post-release follow-up study of 412 men who had been paroled from the Southern Conservation Centre in California for at least 12 months and found a statistical difference in the 2% recidivism rate of those who had received visits from three or more different visitors during the year prior to parole compared to 12% recidivism rate of those who had no contact with family and friends. Adams and Fischer (1976, cited in Visher & Travis, 2003) reported similar results from their 24-month follow-up of 124 men paroled from the Hawaii State Prison in 1969 and 1970.



More recently, Bales and Mears (2008) examined data on 7000 inmates, who were released from Florida Department of Corrections between November 2001 and March 2002, for a 24 months period. They again found that visitation and the amount of visitation were associated with reduced recidivism and that visits occurring closer to the release date were associated with the greatest reduction in re-offending. More specifically, “among inmates who were visited, the odds of recidivism were 30.7 percent lower than the odds for those who were not visited [and] for each additional visit an inmate received, the odds of recidivism declined by 3.8 percent” (Bales & Mears, 2008, p.305). In addition to reducing recidivism, this study also demonstrated that visitation delayed the onset of reoffending, reporting that of the visited offenders who re-offended, “the timing of re-offence was significantly *later* than that of their non-visited counterparts” (Derkzen, Gobeil & Gileno, 2009, p.5).

Derkzen, Gobeil and Gileno (2009) examined the relationship between visits and both readmission and re-offence rates in the 6,537 Canadian federal offenders released in 2005-06. Again, the results demonstrated a positive association between receiving visits and lower levels of readmission, reporting a cumulative effect of each visit reducing the offender’s “odds” of readmission by 2.2%, “such that an offender who received 6.7 visits (the average among those receiving visits) would have odds of readmission 13.7% lower than one who did not receive any” (Derkzen, Gobeil & Gileno, 2009, p.13). This study further demonstrated that receiving visits was significantly associated with remaining in the community longer and that greater numbers of visits were associated with delayed readmission.

Berg and Huebner (2010) examined information on a random sample of 401 males paroled from prisons in a Midwestern state of the United States of America in 2000 and found that those with strong social ties had delayed times to recidivism. While this study did not find a direct link between family ties and recidivism risk, an indirect association was uncovered. Post-release employment was found to have a significant, negative influence on recidivism, “indicating that men who secured jobs following release from prison are less likely to fail on parole and fail less quickly than unemployed men” (p.397), and “controlling for their employment history, offenders with good quality ties to their relatives are at an advantage with regard to acquiring post-release employment (p.401). More simply, offenders with strong family ties were more likely to be employed post-release and, in turn, less likely to recidivate.

Most recently, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (2011) evaluated the relationship between prison visitation and recidivism among 16,420 offenders released from Minnesota prisons between 2003 and 2007. Using an average follow-up period of nearly five years, this study again found that offenders who were visited in prison were significantly less likely to recidivate, with any visit reducing the risk of recidivism by 13% for offence reconvictions and 25% for technical revocations/breaches. Further to this, the findings indicate that more frequent and recent visits are associated with a further decreased risk of recidivism, as was an increased number of different individual visitors, with each additional visitor reducing the risk of reconviction by 3%.

### **1.2.4 Theoretical Explanations**

According to Bales and Mears (2008), many criminological theories “anticipate that social ties can reduce offending, whether through increasing an individual’s bonds with society or the resources he or she has either to succeed in life or to alleviate stressful situations” (p. 288).

#### *Social Bond Theory / Social Control Theory*

In support of the finding that inmate visitation appears to reduce recidivism, Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory (later known as ‘social control theory’) argues that “strong bonds to family, friends and community serve to constrain tendencies to commit crime” (Bales & Mears, 2008, p.291). According to Laub and Sampson (2003, cited in Berg & Huebner, 2011), family ties represent “a source of social control in that they connect reentering offenders to the

conventional social order and in doing so thwart their impulses to recidivate” (p.385). For example, family may provide the released offender with routines and place restrictions on where, and with whom, they socialise. According to this theory, the threat of losing these social ties, together with the prospect of maintaining them, may also act as a motivating factor to deter future criminal behaviour.

### *General Strain Theory*

General strain theory can also assist to explain the positive effect of visitation on recidivism. Arguing that offending behaviour is affected by “the type and extent of coping resources and social supports individuals possess” (Agnew, 2006, cited in Bales & Mears, 2008, p. 292), general strain theory suggests that released inmates with more social ties are more likely to have more acceptable coping strategies and support networks to assist them in better managing the challenges faced in their reintegration to lawful community life.

According to Kaplan, Cassell and Gore (1977, cited in Hairston, 1988), “the presence of a social network protects the individual from a variety of stressful stimuli” (p.50), impacting positively on the individual’s ability to handle stress and foster his or her personal adjustment.

### *Life-course Theories*

Bales and Mears (2008) further suggest that life-course theorists would describe an inmate’s release from custody as a potentially critical transition in the life of that inmate and argue that continued social support from family and friends would be a facilitating factor which could assist the inmate in successful negotiation of this transition. According to this theory, “the expectation is that social supports during and after prison can serve as the critical differentiating factor between those who desist from offending and those who persist” (Maruna & Toch, 2005, cited in Bales & Mears, 2008, p. 292).

### *Labelling Theory*

Labelling theory may provide a further explanation as to how inmate visits reduce recidivism. According to this theory, individuals may take on certain labels and act in ways that fit that label. For example, where an inmate views themselves as an ‘offender’, they are more likely to act like an offender.

Labelling theory further argues that visits and support from family and friends may assist in replacing an inmate’s ‘offender’ label with a more prosocial label such as ‘father’, ‘brother’, ‘husband’, or ‘friend’, thus promoting “a more positive sense of personal identity” (Maruna, 2001, cited in Bales & Mears, 2008, p.293) and, in turn, a positive behavioural change to reflect this new identity. In this respect, it is argued that “family relationships are fundamental components in the process of cognitive change” (Berg & Huebner, 2011, p.385) whereby the familial tie and the offender’s participation in the roles inhered in family ties enables the offender to perceive themselves as a contributing member of society and construct an alternative, more socially acceptable, identity. In fact, studies have shown that “men who assume family roles and responsibilities following incarceration have lower levels of recidivism than those who do not” (Hairston, 2001, p.11).

### *Social Capital Theory*

“Beyond supplying social control, social support, and the impetus for identity transformation, familial ties also serve an instrumental function in the post-release environment” (Berg & Huebner, 2011, p.386). As a result, social capital theory explains the importance of visits for inmates, viewing support from family and friends as a form of social capital, through this provision of financial and psychological assistance to the inmate whilst in custody and after their release.

According to Hairston (1988), inmates' families "provide concrete resources such as money and clothing to the prisoner, influence his or her help-seeking behaviour and use of prison programs and services, and provide him or her with information about life outside the walls and family activities" (p.50). In addition, "they act as a bridge to the job market" (Glaser, 1964, cited in Berg & Huebner, 2011, p.386).

According to Berg & Huebner (2011), social capital promotes the likelihood of job attainment through information flow (i.e. offenders learn of employment opportunities from members of their family); influencing decision makers (i.e. an endorsement by a family member can persuade potential employers to employ an ex-prisoner); certificating qualifications (i.e. deficits in ex-prisoners' qualifications or reputation might be outweighed by their potential to secure material assets from their social network), and reinforcement of their identity and reputation through the maintenance of the familial tie.

### 1.3 Visiting a Correctional Centre in NSW

CSNSW recognises the importance of visits between inmates and their families, and provides contact visiting facilities at each correctional centre in order to assist inmates to maintain family relationships.

Generally, visits are available to all inmates and occur during the determined visiting hours for each centre. Visiting hours and length are at the discretion of the General Manager, subject to the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008*, which states "a visit is to be permitted to continue for at least 30 minutes, unless it is terminated or unless it would otherwise extend beyond visiting hours" (s71(4)).

Section 72 of the Regulation states that an unconvicted inmate may be visited twice weekly, whereas a convicted inmate may be visited "at such intervals as the General Manager determines".

Visits to inmates may be either "contact" visits, in which the inmate and the visitor are permitted physical contact with each other, or "non-contact" visits<sup>3</sup>, in which the visit takes place in an environment in which physical contact is prevented.

The visitation process requires visitors to provide specified forms of identification prior to the issue of a visitor identification number (VIN) to enable the visit to take place. Visitors' details are then recorded on the CSNSW Offender Integrated Management System to be retrieved when the visitor makes an appointment for a future visit. In addition, prior to each visit, visitors must undergo a biometric identification process, where iris and fingerprints are scanned, and a security search, which may involve the use of metal detection equipment and/or drug detection dogs.

Restrictions specify the type of items visitors can take with them into a visit, with lockers usually available to hold unauthorised belongings for the duration of the visit.

### 1.4 Visitor Surveys

As stated by Sturges and Al-Khattar (2009), "visitors are stakeholders in jail policies" (p. 495). It is, therefore, essential that their opinions on visiting policies, procedures, and facilities be considered. Surveys of visitors to correctional centres have been conducted in the United States (Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2008; Christian, 2005; Tewksbury &

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<sup>3</sup> The General Manager may direct a "non-contact" visit if he/she is of the opinion that the visitor is likely to introduce prohibited goods or property into the centre, or act in a threatening, offensive, indecent, obscene, abusive or improper manner. Alternatively, "non-contact" visits may be enforced as a punishment for a correctional centre offence, whereby the inmate has been deprived of participation in contact visits for up to 56 days.

DeMichele, 2005; Sturges & Al-Khattar, 2009), Canada (Duncan & Balbar, 2008), and the United Kingdom (Ormiston Children & Families Trust, 2007) in order to obtain such opinions.

Within Australia, Begg (2002) surveyed 84 visitors to correctional centres in the Wacol Region of Queensland and, as mentioned previously, Eyland (1996) and McHutchison (2000) conducted surveys on visitors to correctional centres across New South Wales.

Interestingly, similar concerns have been raised in all jurisdictions. The universally reported themes include; travelling distance, limited availability of parking, limited visiting days and hours, poor treatment by visits staff, poor cleanliness and comfort of visiting areas, limited facilities for young children, the “inability to access adequate levels of information from correctional centres which is reliable, consistent, timely and accessible” (Begg, 2002, p. 13), and “bureaucratic barriers to visitation” (Bales & Mears, 2008, p. 315).

## **1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Present Study**

“In light of the potential benefits stemming from visitation programs, administrators and criminal justice researchers would do well to consider visitors’ perceptions of the structure, process, and experience of visiting” (Tewksbury & DeMichele, 2005, p.308).

With this in mind, the current study aims to obtain up-to-date feedback from friends and family visiting offenders in custody. The collected information will provide a profile of visitors and an understanding of their opinions on the treatment received, procedures followed, and conditions experienced at visiting centres in NSW correctional centres. Such information can potentially be used to assist CSNSW in the provision of appropriate visiting facilities for those who visit offenders in custody across NSW.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Practical Issues Considered**

The two previous correctional centre visitor surveys undertaken by Corporate Research, Evaluation and Statistics both used a mail out with reply paid envelope. Response rates in both surveys were around 24% which is very high for that methodology.

However, a number of issues arose with respondents. Most notable were the privacy concerns raised by visitors who had not told other family members that they were visiting an inmate inside a correctional centre.

As a result, important issues required consideration by the Committee in order to determine the current methodology.

#### *(i) Self complete Questionnaire*

The use of a self complete questionnaire mail out methodology had a number of drawbacks. There were issues with the accuracy of the CSNSW Visitor Identity Number (VIN) data, costs associated with a large mail out and issues of privacy outlined above. The research officer undertaking the 2000 survey raised some of these issues, e.g. some members of a household were not always aware others in the household were visiting offenders in correctional centres.

Potential alternative methodologies are telephone surveys, face-to-face interviews and distribution of questionnaires at visitor centres. However, these methodologies also had issues to be considered.

Telephone surveys may be more costly as they are labour intensive and also have the potential for a skewed and low response rate. They also rely on VIN data for numbers which may be inaccurate and out of date.

Face to face interviews are also labour intensive and would likely be exit interviews undertaken at visitor centres. It has previously been noted that this would impinge on the limited time that is available for visits and impact on the quality of responses.

*(ii) Cost of conducting the survey*

From information gathered from the research officer who undertook the survey in 2000, a private company was contracted to undertake the mail out at a cost of around \$12000. Costs would have increased in the last 10 years. There was the possibility of using CSNSW facilities to undertake some of the mail out, e.g. the CSNSW Human Resources has a machine to fold and put them in envelopes. It was possible to use this machine but it has not been tested for a survey such as this.

*(iii) Targeted survey*

A scaled down survey of correctional centres, rather than a State-Wide survey, was another possibility but careful attention would have to be given to the selection of the centres.

## **2.2 Current Methodology**

As a result of the above considerations, the current study utilised the following methodology:

Questionnaires were made available to all family and friends who visited an offender in custody in NSW during the month of April 2011. The Visitors Survey was obtainable in the visiting areas of each of the 36 correctional centres across NSW. Posters advertising the survey were displayed, and visitors were given the option of completing the survey forms at the Centre and putting them in a sealed box, or taking the form away to complete and return with a reply paid envelope. There was also an option to complete the survey online.

The self-completion questionnaire was printed as a 4-page booklet folded from A3 paper. A background to the survey and instructions on how to complete and return the questionnaire were printed on the front of the booklet (see Appendix 1).

### **2.2.1 Data**

The survey aimed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data through a combination of closed (fixed-choice) and open-ended questions.

Data were collected on the following;

- The visitors' age, gender, country of birth, and ATSI status,
- Whether they were caring for any children,
- Their relationship to the prisoner they were visiting,
- Their reason(s) for visiting,
- The number of prisoners they visited in the previous month, and
- Mode of travel and travelling time to visits,
- Length of visit, and waiting time,
- Opinion of the standard of visit facilities (cleanliness, toilet facilities, etc.),

- Problems experienced when visiting,
- Acceptance levels of automated visiting booking service,
- Opinion on child care facilities at each visit centre,
- General measure of CSNSW staff attitudes and efficiencies,
- Attitude towards drug detection program conducted in visit areas (drug dogs, bag searches, particle detection, etc),
- Feedback on security innovations (scanning, facial recognition, metal detectors, etc),
- Uptake and opinion on use of the video-visits system,
- Awareness of, and application for, the Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme,
- Whether they had seen the “Visiting a Correctional Centre” Handbook and whether it had been helpful, and
- General measure of satisfaction in relation to the visiting experience.

### **2.2.2 Analysis**

Given a relatively small number of respondents, the report will provide descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages and averages.

Descriptive statistics have been employed to profile demographic characteristics of visitors. This profile includes the following factors: gender, age, country of birth, ATSI status, whether they were caring for any children, and the children’s ages, and the visitor’s relationship to the prisoner they were visiting.

In addition, themes may be identified from the qualitative data collected.

While the current study is similar in nature to those carried out in 1994 and 1999, it should be noted that the differences in methodology used for the current study make it difficult to compare findings. As argued by McHutchison (2000), it is not possible to say if any of the three studies obtained a representative sample of visitors. Due to the voluntary nature of the survey, any apparent similarities or differences may in fact be a result of similarities or differences in those choosing to respond to any of the three surveys.

## **3. Findings**

### **3.1 Response Rate**

A total of 6470 survey forms were provided to correctional centres across New South Wales. Of these, 516 questionnaires were returned, however sixteen of these forms were discarded because of incomplete data. As a result, 500 useable questionnaires were returned - a response rate of 7.73%.

Visitors were also given the option of responding to the survey via the internet. An additional 106 visitors chose to complete their survey online. Thus, a total of 606 surveys were included in the study.

When considering that approximately 17,000 individuals visited an offender, at least once, during the evaluation period, this provides a response rate of closer to 3.56%. It should also be noted that, within this low response rate, there is also a high amount of ‘missing’ data, where questions have been omitted, or responses removed due to their unrelated nature.



The number of responses received from each correctional centre varied from 0 to 53 (see Appendix 2). This difference in the responding may have resulted from any number of factors, including (but not limited to); the amount of time spent by staff promoting the survey, the amount of time visitors had to complete the survey, the views of visitors, or the literacy levels of visitors.

### 3.2 Profile of Respondents

#### 3.2.1 Demographics

A total of 606 visitors completed the survey. Similar to respondents of the 1996 and 2000 visitor surveys, about three-quarters (74.3%) of the visitors who responded to the current survey were female.

Overall, the age of respondents ranged from 9 to 86 years, with the average age being 42.6 years. The average age of female respondents (41.31 years) was less than that of the male respondents (48.37 years).

Again, as with the 1996 and 2000 surveys, the majority of respondents (76.9%) reported that they were born in Australia. A further 3.6% reported being born in the United Kingdom and 3.0% in Europe. The birthplace of 9.7% of respondents was unknown.

Sixty-six visitors (10.9%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, with a further 52 (8.6%) not responding to this question.

While 47 (7.8%) of visitors did not advise whether they were caring for any children, 205 (33.8%) visitors reported that they were. Of these, 32.2% reported having one child, 31.7% reported having two children, 18.5% reported having three children, and 13.7% reported having four or more children in their care. The remaining 3.9% of respondents did not report on the number of children under their care.

#### 3.2.2 The Relationship between Visitors and Inmates

While 36 respondents (5.9%) did not to disclose the nature of their relationship with the prisoner they were visiting, the majority of those who did respond to this question reported visiting their 'son or daughter' (22.9%).

An additional 19.3% of respondents reported visiting their 'husband or de facto' in custody.

Forty-seven of the respondents (7.8%) selected 'other' when describing the nature of their relationship with the prisoner they were visiting.

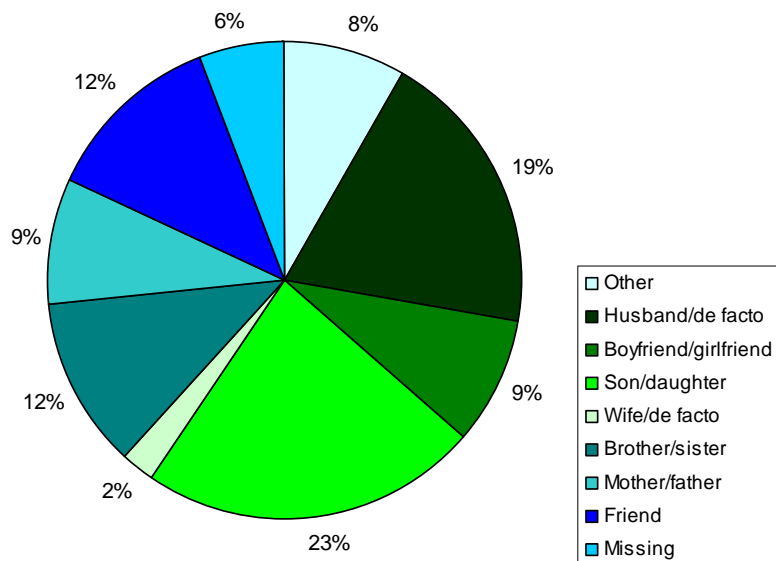


Figure 1: Relationship of Offender to Visitor

'Other' relationships included; cousins, grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and in-laws.

### **3.2.3 Number of Inmates Visited in the Last Month**

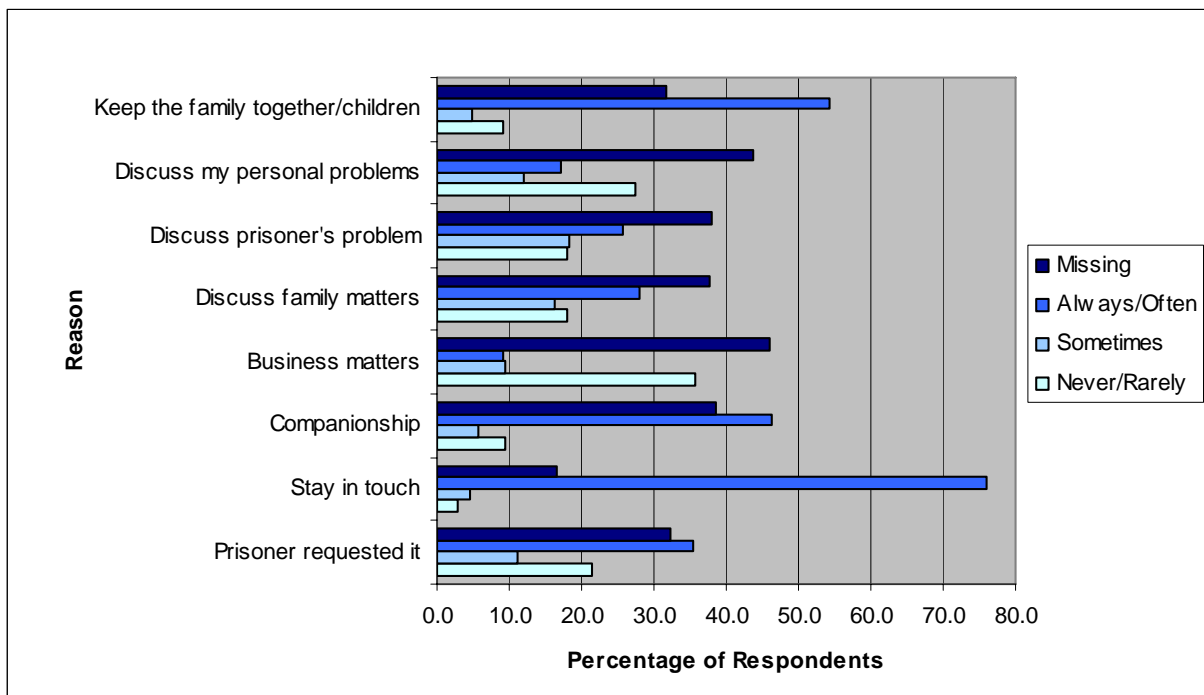
The majority of respondents (493, 81.4%) reported only visiting the one inmate in the month leading up to completion of the survey; while a further 28 (4.6%) advised that they had visited two inmates in the last month. Seventy-three of the respondents (12%) did not respond to this question.

### **3.2.4 Reasons for Visiting**

The most common reasons for visiting included;

- to stay in touch/maintain relationship (76.1% of respondents advised that this was 'always' or 'often' the reason for visiting),
- to keep the family together/children (54.3% of respondents advised that this was 'always' or 'often' the reason for visiting), and
- for companionship (46.4% of respondents advised that this was 'always' or 'often' the reason for visiting).

The least common reason for visiting was to discuss business matters, with 35.7% of respondents reporting this as 'rarely' or 'never' being the reason for them visiting an inmate.



**Figure 2: Respondents' Reasons for Visiting an Inmate**

When asked about 'other' reasons they visited the prisoner, the majority of respondents stated that they visited to provide moral support (*"to make sure she knows someone still loves and cares about her"*) and because they love the prisoner (*"because I miss him like crazy"*). Other visitors stated that the primary reason for visiting was to assist in re-socialisation (*"contact with the lawful citizens and to inspire him to overcome his past"*) and plan for the prisoner's release (*"future lifestyle options"*).



### 3.3 Travel

According to Christian (2005), “one component of understanding the family perspective of incarceration is examining what the process of getting to a prison visit is like” (p.36).

#### **3.3.1 Mode of Transport to Visits**

The most common form of transport reported to be used by visitors to attend visits was their own car/bike (80.2%).

A further 4.8% of respondents reported getting a lift to the correctional centre with friends, while 4.3% reported catching public transport.

566 visitors responded to the question regarding travelling time, with responses varying from 2 minutes to 30 hours (a respondent who flew to Sydney from overseas).

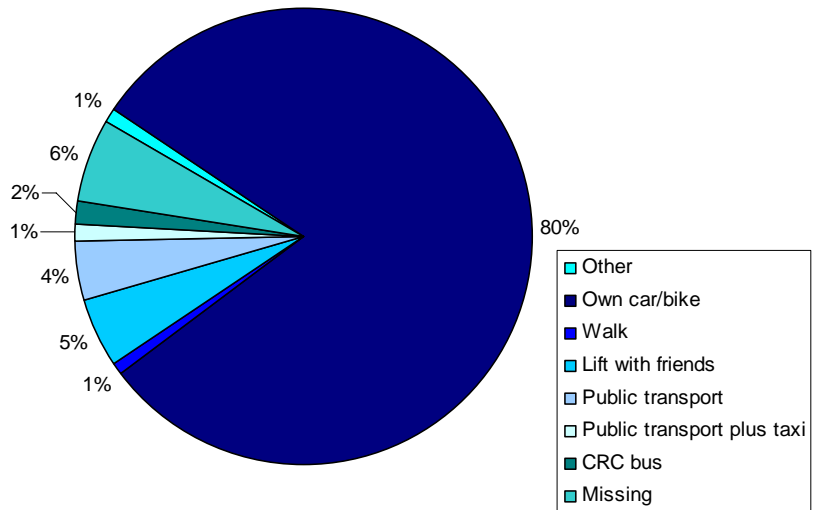


Figure 3: Respondents' Usual Mode of Transport to Visits

The median response was 90 minutes, while the most frequent response was 2 hours.

#### **3.3.2 Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme**

CSNSW offers financial assistance for travel and accommodation expenses to inmates' family members who experience financial hardship which may prevent travelling long distances to visit. To qualify for the scheme, the inmate they wish to visit must be serving a term of imprisonment of at least six months, the visitor must be receiving a commonwealth benefit and have not received travel and or accommodation assistance to visit the inmate within the previous twelve weeks, and the distance to travel is more than 200 kilometres one way.

Only 84 (13.9%) of the respondents reported that they were aware of the Travel and Accommodation Assistance scheme for visitors to prison. A further 5.8% did not respond to this question.

Twenty-five (4.1%) visitors stated that they had applied, while 19 (3.1%) reported being successful in obtaining assistance.

### 3.4 Visiting Times & Bookings

#### **3.4.1 Arrival Time**

The majority of respondents (454, 74.9%) stated that they usually arrived at the correctional centre before scheduled visiting hours. While respondents advised that they arrived between 2 minutes and 3 hours prior to visiting hours, the average amount of time that respondents reported arriving was 32 minutes prior.

When asked ‘why’ they usually arrive prior to scheduled visiting hours, all responses related to maximising the visiting time (“to get the longest visit possible”). The most common responses included:

- to facilitate processing (“so the booking in process doesn't cut into our visiting time”);
- to avoid queues (“there is always a big line up”);
- to allow travelling time (“beat the traffic and get parking”); and
- to get a longer visit (“to get as long a visit as possible - to be in first group admitted”).

A number of respondents also advised that they arrived earlier than the scheduled visiting hours as they were “told to” when booking, with one visitor stating “it is a requirement to be processed prior to visits scheduled time otherwise the visit is forfeited”.

### **3.4.2 Waiting Time**

While 12 respondents reported that they did not usually have to wait to see the prisoner they are visiting once visiting hours had started, the most frequent response was 30 minutes (118, 23.3%), with the average wait being 27 minutes.

Of the 507 visitors who responded to this question 52% reported commencing their visit within 20 minutes of visiting hours starting, while 76% reported commencing their visit within half an hour.

Unfortunately a further 12% of respondents reported waiting over an hour for their visit to commence, with five respondents reporting that they waited 2-3 hours once visiting hours had started to see the prisoner they were visiting. It is unclear as to what the cause of such lengthy delays was on these occasions.

### **3.4.3 Length of Visit**

While 64 respondents (10.6%) did not answer the question about the length of their visits, those who did respond reported visits ranging from 20 minutes to 7 hours. The most frequent response (30.6%) was 1 hour, while the median was 2 hours.

### **3.4.4 Frequency of Visits**

On average, the majority of respondents (329, 54.3%) advised that they visited the inmate at least once a week (16.7% selecting ‘2 or 3 times a week’ and 37.6% selecting ‘once a week’). A further 33.5% of respondents reported visiting once to three times a month, while 4.3% reported visiting ‘once or twice a year’.

When asked how long the visitor had been visiting the prisoner in custody, responses ranged from 1 to 6209 days (17 years). The median response was 300 days (approximately 10 months), while the most frequent response was 1 year.

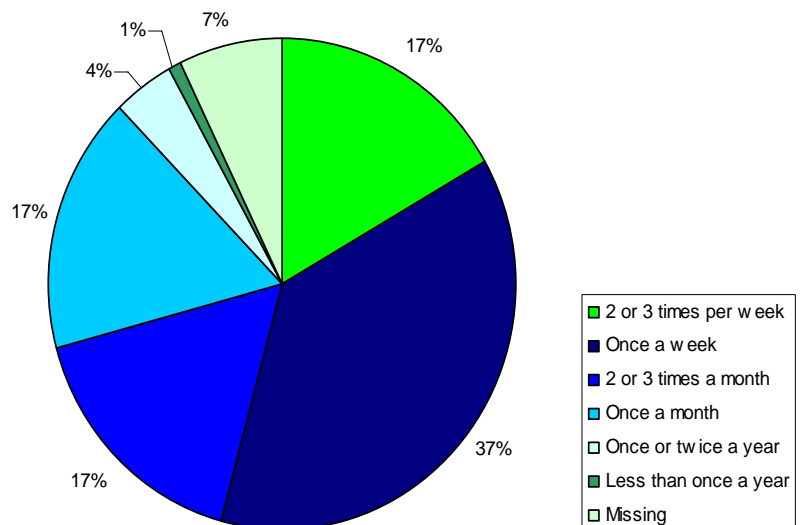


Figure 4: Respondents' Frequency of Visits

### **3.4.5 Suitability of Visiting Times and Days**

When asked whether there were visiting times or days that were not suitable, the majority of respondents (60.2%) responded 'no'. A further 14% did not respond to this question.

While the majority reported no unsuitable visiting time or days, many included comments in relation to improving the suitability. Where the correctional centre they were visiting restricted visiting to weekends, a number of respondents requested week day visits, whereas where the centre offered weekday visits, respondents requested weekend visits. As a result, the overarching response was to facilitate visiting "7 days per week". Comments and suggestions included:

- *"Visiting times and days are too limited...No weekday visits"*
- *"Visits should be 7 days per week"*
- *"A week day visit would be very useful as often the children have sporting or social events on a weekend"*
- *"During the week would sometimes be easier. Accommodation is sometimes booked out on weekends due to local events"*
- *"Due to work commitments weekends not always suitable"*
- *"No flexibility for working families"*
- *"I work on weekends usually. I've had to change jobs so I can visit on the weekend"*
- *"If you work weekends have to take days off"*
- *"Visiting days should range from Monday to Sunday"*
- *"I cannot visit him on weekends it would be nice to have a 2-3 visit weekdays and weekends"*
- *"Only Saturday and Sunday visits with only one visit permitted per week. Would prefer both days being available for visits"*
- *"A week day visit would be very useful as often the children have sporting or social events of a weekend"*
- *"Not everyone works Monday to Friday and so some members of our family are not able to visit. Having more flexibility on available days to visit would be fair"*
- *"I work full-time as a teacher which means my hours are not flexible. I only visit on weekend and holidays"*
- *"Only weekend visits often we are rostered to work thus we are unable to visit"*
- *"Weekends are best for most but not for me. Weekends are busy (work) times so it is difficult to make it plus the distance"*
- *"Mid week visits are necessary when visitors travel from faraway destinations"*

Other comments and suggestions in relation to the limitation placed on visiting days and hours included:

- *"Need more than 1 visit per week"*
- *"It would be great if they were longer visits"*
- *"I don't know how you can limit the time on weekends to 2hrs. Particularly as most visitors travel some distance...to visit loved ones. The mornings give you 2 hours but the afternoon visits can be as little as 1 hour 30 minutes"*

- *“For people visiting on weekends the times are either 9am or 12pm. When you live over two hours away 9am is pretty early and 12pm is far too late, the entire day is wasted for one visit”.*
- *“More family days for children and parents”.*
- *“Sunday morning is a difficult time for people due to lack of transport”.*
- *“Prisoner should be closer to home. Makes things much easier rather than disrupting my children's lives to travel so far on weekends (work commitments) plus travel costs!”*
- *“I travel very far and can only come on Saturdays. I would like the visiting hours to be longer or for me to initiate the extended visitation approval so that I can visit for longer since I cannot see my brother every weekend”.*
- *“...is a long distance to travel for a visit. For family making this journey it is extremely difficult when it's for a single hour. It would at least be desirable to be able to meet on both days on the weekend since the travel time of 6 hours round trip”.*
- *“As I travel long distance I would prefer if there would be an option of visitation on two days in a row”.*
- *“Should be no lunch break”.*
- *“Times are too short”.*

### **3.4.6 Booking System**

According to the Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2004), “booking arrangements should be established to minimise visitors waiting to commence a visit and to enable the length of visits to be extended” (p.24).

Four hundred and ninety nine respondents (82.3%) reported that the prison that they regularly visit had a telephone booking system. A further 64 (10.6%) did not respond to this question.

When asked about the frequency of problems associated with using this system, a large number of respondents advised that waiting time on phone (213, 35.1%) and the system being busy (220, 36.3%) were ‘often’ or ‘always’ issues for them. Alternatively, a similar number of respondents reported that the system ringing out (228, 37.7%) and experiencing difficulties making a booking (251, 41.5%) were ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ issues for them.

The majority of issues raised by visitors in relation to the phone booking system referred to the waiting time and cost of the call; the limited times of when they could call; restrictions about when and whom they could book visits for; errors made in booking details; and the impolite response they received from bookings officers. A selection of responses is listed below.

#### Waiting time / Busy line

- *“Line is very busy and hard to get through especially when you are on a lunch break from work - and when the line is busy constantly it is frustrating”.*
- *“On average I wait 20-30 minutes before an operator answers. I am not exaggerating 9-10 times I have to wait over 20 minutes to be answered”.*
- *“Sometimes you have to wait hours to get a booking when the system is busy.”*
- *“The issue is that it is hard to get through. I have to sit on the phone just hitting redial. Sometimes I will ring up to 50 times per day to get through”.*

#### Cost of the telephone call

- *“As it is an STD call waiting on hold can get very expensive. A 1800 number for those of us who are not from Sydney would help negate this extra cost”*
- *“The recorded message comes on instead of being placed in queue or engaged signal - this means I get charged for the call. Last week got charged for about 20 calls before I got through”.*
- *“Often I am not at home when I need to make a booking. Most of the time it doesn't even connect so I end up calling about 30 times until it gets hooked. Once it does get hooked the wait is so long that my mobile phone bill is very high every month”.*

#### Limited booking times

- *“Restricted days and time to ring and line always busy”.*
- *“Times available to ring to make a booking is limited - not available during my work lunch time”*
- *“Why can't I book online?”*

#### Restrictions on what can be booked and making changes

- *“Have to book 1 week in advance - visit times are often changed”.*
- *“Need to be able to book both weekend visits at the same time to avoid phone costs and time wasted especially when at work”.*
- *“Can't book 2 visits in one call”.*
- *“Husband and wife should be able to book each other and immediate family”.*
- *“Can't change visitor details if something comes up”.*
- *“When booking is made you are not able to add extra people”.*
- *“It would be helpful to visitors if changes to bookings were more flexible. Visitors who work on weekends at short notice need more flexibility in the booking system”.*

#### Incorrect details entered

- *“When names are not listed properly on the booking date, you're not allowed to visit”.*
- *“Bookings have been made and when we have arrived they said we had no booking, now I record the officers name, time and date I make the booking, as the distance we travel we cannot afford to be turned away”.*

#### Impolite response from booking officer

- *“Telephone staff are very rude and unhelpful”*
- *“Sometimes the line picks up and the officer hangs up on you”*
- *“Sometimes the operator thinks he or she can treat the visitors as they are the criminals. They lack decent customer services and don't understand that the visitors are not the criminals and they need support and respect”.*

### **3.4.7 Video-visit System**

The video-visits system has been implemented at a number of correctional centres in New South Wales as “a way to increase safety, lower costs, increase the number and amount of time for visits, reduce security and liability concerns, save time, and reduce the need to screen the public” (cited in Sturges & Al-Khattar, 2009, p484).

While beneficial to those who would otherwise have to travel long distances to visit their friend or family member in custody, five hundred and fifty four respondents (91.4%) advised that they have not used a video-visit system for a family member or friend in prison. In fact, the majority of respondents reported not knowing about the existence of the system.

### 3.5 Security

#### 3.5.1 Security Procedures

According to the Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2004), “effective systems should be implemented to control access to the prison, including the identification of persons entering the prison” (Clause 3.24).

Visitor identification in NSW correctional centres occurs in two stages. The first time a person visits an inmate in custody they will be allocated a Visitor Identification Number (VIN), after producing appropriate forms of identification. At this time, an electronic record of the visitor’s details will be created on the CSNSW Offender Integrated Management System (OIMS) visitor database. In addition to this, the visitor’s photo will be taken and their fingerprints (and iris in some centres) scanned. This second process is known as ‘Biometric Identification’.

Once a visitor’s details have been entered in the OIMS visitor database, and their scans are saved on the Biometric Identification Device (BID), the identification of the visitor at any subsequent visit can be verified via the BID database. Unfortunately however, as the BID and OIMS are not linked, officers must also check the visitor’s details on OIMS prior to the visit to ensure that the visitor is not ‘prohibited’ or ‘restricted’.

A further delay in the processing of visitors may be due to the fact that (at the time of preparing this report) the BIDs for each correctional centre throughout NSW are not networked. This results in visitors being required to undergo the process of having their fingerprints and images captured at each of the centres they visit.

When asked about security procedures, the majority of respondents reported encountering walk through metal detectors (75.9%), hand held metal detectors (68.2%), and drug detection dogs (63.2%) during their visits.

Fewer visitors reported experiencing iris scanning (35%) or facial scanning (23.9%).

When asked what ‘other’ security measures visitors encountered, 75 reported undergoing finger print scanning.

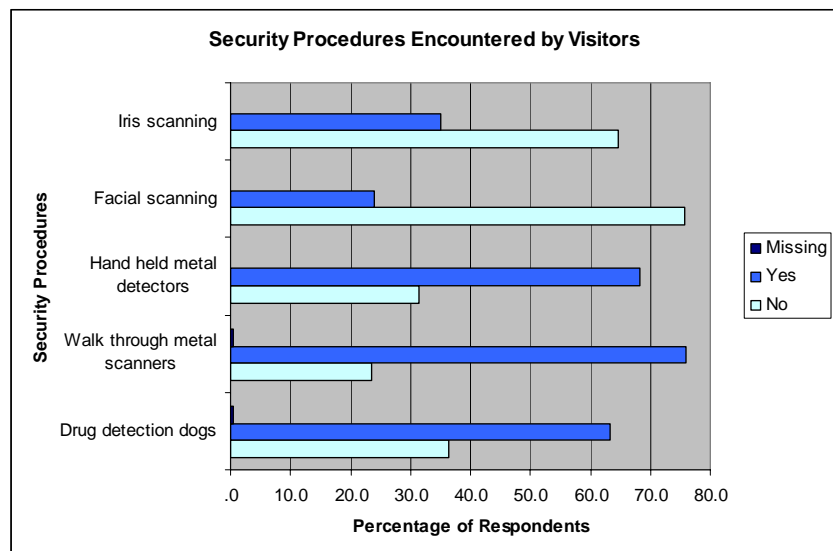


Figure 5: Security Procedures Encountered by Respondents

Others reported having photo identification examined; being “frisked”; and having mouths, pockets, shoes, and socks checked. One respondent reported experiencing a random car search, while another reported being strip searched.

The majority of respondents (320) reported having “no” problems with any of the security measures.

Of those who did report problems with these measures, the most common issue related to the iris scanner and/or finger print scanner failing to detect or identify the visitor. Comments included:

- *The eye scanners never ever work, have to scan them 3-4 times then the officers search your name manually in the computer, such a waste of time.*
- *I wear glasses so the iris scanners are always a drama for me as the scanners cannot detect my eyes with my glasses on and if I take my glasses off I can't see the scanner.*
- *My 85 year old mother who has macular degeneration and has weekly injections into her eye has problems with the iris scanner and puts off visiting because of it - sad.*
- *The iris scanner never works for me. I spend so many tries for the iris scanner and it is so frustrating because it's not my fault. In the end I go in manually but then the following visit it happens again.*
- *My mother-in-law was scanned 13 times for the iris scan.*
- *Fingerprint scan doesn't always register.*
- *Fingerprint often takes 5 times before it works.*
- *Fingerprint never works and delays processing for other visitors (only on some visitors).*
- *Only left hand works with finger scanner.*

Similarly, a small number of visitors complained about computer malfunctions, or interference, resulting from medical procedures (e.g. *“I have had a hip replacement so when I go through I have to be screened”, “I have a knee replacement and the buzzer keeps going off, not a big deal but annoying”*).

Other issues with security measures included the following:

The time used to carry out the measures -

- *“Needs to be a quicker method as we waste visit time”*
- *“It's a pain - takes too long”*
- *“Time taken without time given back in visit (40 mins lost)”*

The intrusive or degrading nature of the measures -

- *“Removing footwear for x-ray scanner and being made to walk on the filthy floor uncovered is degrading and quite unhygienic”*
- *“It is unfair that we are treated like criminals as well”*
- *“Makes me feel like I am the prisoner, always feel judged - guilty by association however no one in my family has a criminal history”.*

The poor treatment visitors experienced from officers during the process -

- *“The staff are very rude sometimes”*
- *“When officers treat you like criminals when there is no reason”*
- *“Staff should be more polite and understanding”.*

Inconsistency in the way security measures are conducted -

- *“I have no issue with the actual security procedures that are required but on the whole they are so inconsistent throughout the various jails. If there are security procedures that need to be followed then they should be the same no matter where you go”*
- *“There seems to be an inconsistency in regards to what is allowed to bring along depending on who does the security checks”*
- *“I have a problem with the fact that I was asked to open my mouth, they looked behind my ears and the next week a Muslim woman walked in and was not asked to remove her scarf and they did not check her out or her husband. I think this is wrong”*
- *“I have had to take shoes, belts, jacket off. Not fair some people can wear burkas”.*

The need for information to be available to visitors about the security measures -

- *“I would like to be notified of whether my iris info is passed on to any third party”*
- *“No explanation was given as to why this is required, officers unable to advise how long the information is stored, who has access to the information and how long this is stored for. A brochure would be beneficial for all visitors”.*

### **3.5.2 Refusal of Visit**

Ninety-four visitors (15.5%) reported being turned away from a visit, while 468 (77.2%) reported that they had never been turned away. Sixteen of the respondents (2.6%) advised that the reason for being turned away was ‘inappropriate footwear’, while six (1%) reported the reason as being ‘inappropriate dress’.

When asked about the ‘other’ reasons for being turned away from visits, the most frequent response (22) involved *an administration error on behalf of the staff member taking the booking*. Visitors made the following comments:

- *“When booking by phone, one name of visitor was missed so we had to be refused”;*
- *“We had been on the telephone for over an hour and had a booking but on arrival, after waiting an hour in the waiting room we were told that there was no booking and that there was no record of us making a booking”;*
- *“I booked but was not on list when I arrived”;*
- *“At another prison I always visited on Sunday, I was told on my visit had been booked for Saturday and refused entry – this was clearly a mistake by booking officer”;*
- *“The person who took my booking took it on a wrong day and I travelled 4 hours each day for their stupid mistake”;* and
- *“Staff members incorrectly listing which family members would be attending the visit despite myself actually making the phone call to book the visit. Even though the staff admitted to having made the error we were still turned away”.*

One visitor admitted to forgetting to book.

Twelve respondents reported a strike or lockdown being the reason for being turned away from a visit.



Six visitors advised that they were turned away from a visit as a result of the prisoner having been transferred to another correctional centre. Comments included:

- “Waited inside for son after being processed to be then told he had moved”;
- “Prisoner moved to another location. We were not informed until next visit”;
- “Son was in hospital and no one notified me”; and
- “The inmate was moved to another correctional centre with no notice at all even though they did have my number. They did not bother telling me until I'd waited for 20 minutes for my number to be called out and 3 of us visitors id's were all processed”.

Five respondents reported forgetting, losing or not having enough (or valid) identification, while four reported being turned away from a visit after being accused or suspected of having contraband – “I got a lift from someone who had medication in their car” and “a sniffer dog smelled illegal drug residue”.

### 3.6 Treatment by Staff

The CSNSW Visitors Customer Service Charter (see Appendix 3) states that the Department will ensure that visitors “are treated in a professional manner, consistent with fairness, courtesy and sensitivity”. This is in accordance with the Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2004), which states that “visitors should be treated with respect” (p. 24).

The results of the current survey indicate that a good proportion of CSNSW staff are adhering to these guidelines and charter undertakings.

When asked whether the respondent and their family were treated politely by Corrective Services staff when they visit the prison, 67.8% (411) reported this to be ‘often’ or ‘always’ the case.

Unfortunately, a further sixty-two visitors (10.3%) reported that they were ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ treated politely by staff when they visit the prison.

Thirty visitors (5%) did not respond to this question.

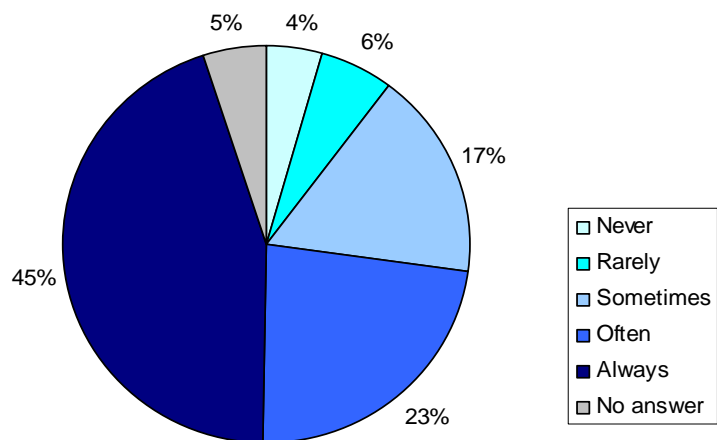


Figure 6: Frequency of Polite Treatment by CSNSW Staff Reported by Visitors

### 3.7 Visiting Facilities

According to the Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2004), “visiting facilities should be provided that are conducive to prisoners receiving visitors in as dignified a manner as is consistent with the security and good order of the prison” (p.24). The Guidelines also state that “where possible, prisons should provide for visitors to take refreshments in the company of prisoners and for suitable play facilities, equipment and toys to be made available for visiting children” (p.25).

Similarly, the CSNSW Visitors Customer Service Charter states that the Department will provide “a relaxed, friendly and comfortable visiting facility,...reasonable facilities for the storage of valuable property,...children friendly facilities,...[and] facilities for disabled visitors”.

In order to assess the level of satisfaction with such facilities, visitors were asked to rate the toilets, lockers, furniture, temperature, space, disabled access, waiting area, drink/food machine, tea/coffee facilities, sheltered outdoor space, visitor car park, and visitor information, available at the correctional centre they visit.

Lockers and car parking received the highest rating with 58.9% (n=357) and 45.2% (n=274) of respondents respectively rating these facilities as 'good' or 'excellent'.

Conversely, 55 visitors (9.1%) rated the lockers as 'poor' or 'non-existent', commenting that they were *"too small if having travelled a distance"* or *"often broken"*, while a larger number of respondents (147, 24.3%) provided this rating in relation to car parking. Their comments included;

- *"Parking is impossible"*
- *"Visitor carpark is always full from 8am never been able to park there"*
- *"I say that the visitor car park is no-existent because there is no dedicated visitors carpark. The carpark is always at least half full with officer vehicles, lawyers, police and Corrective Services vehicles"*

A small number of comments made specific reference to disabled parking (*"need closer disabled parking"* and *"disabled parking spaces inefficient"*).

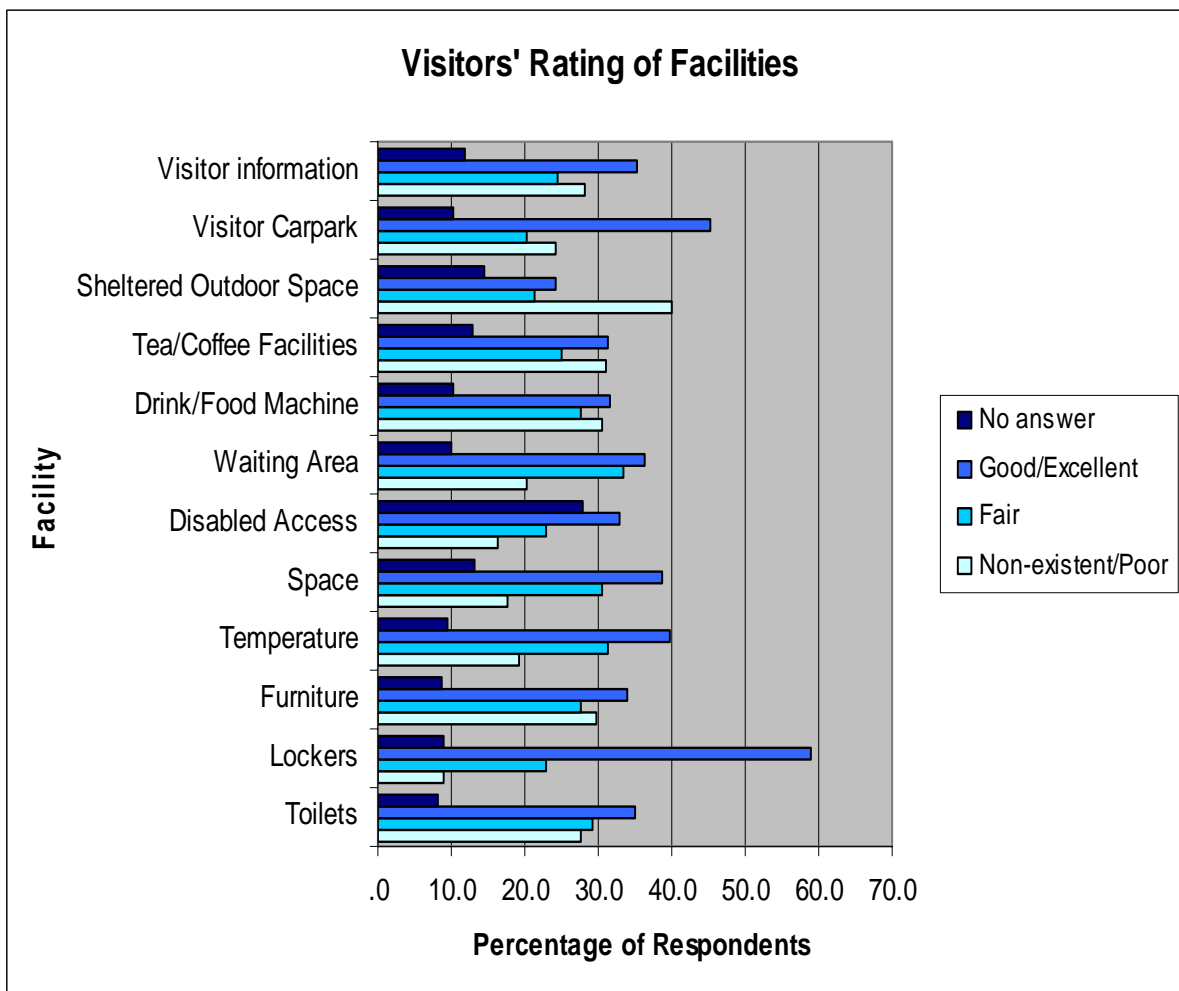


Figure 7: Respondents' Rating of Facilities

A greater proportion of respondents rated both the temperature and waiting area as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ than those who gave a rating of ‘poor’ or ‘non-existent’ (see Figure 8).

Comments relating to the temperature focused on the *“lack of temperature control”* in visiting areas with one respondent stating *“we are either sweltering in 40 degree heat...or we freeze in the cold”*.

Comments relating to the waiting area concentrated on the size of the area (*“waiting area and processing area far too small”*) and the availability of refreshments while waiting (*“it would be nice to have food or drink available in the waiting area”*).

Facility	Non-existent/ Poor		Good/ Excellent	
	No.	%	No.	%
Temperature	117	19.3	241	39.8
Waiting area	123	20.3	220	36.3

**Table 1: Respondents' Rating of Temperature and Waiting Area**

A smaller discrepancy (approximately 7%) was found between the proportion of respondents who rated both the toilets and visitor information as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ and those who gave a rating of ‘poor’ or ‘non-existent’ to these facilities (see Figure 9).

Facility	Non-existent/ Poor		Good/ Excellent	
	No.	%	No.	%
Toilets	168	27.7	212	35.0
Visitor Information	171	28.2	214	35.3

**Table 2: Respondents' Rating of Toilets and Visitor Information**

Comments on the toilets in the visiting area related to poor hygiene and availability or access (e.g. *“Toilets have no soap”, “Toilets were filthy and no access once inside visitors section”, “Needs to be toilet in visiting area for children to go even if it is locked and you need a key. Children have trouble holding on for 2 hours especially when just been toilet trained”*.)

The CSNSW Operations Procedures Manual (2011) acknowledges that “some children may need to use toilet facilities during a visit...and some may need to be accompanied by an adult visitor” (p.12) and states that the visit “may be permitted to be continued conditional upon re-screening prior to re-entry into the visiting facility. In such cases, visitors should be given priority to re-enter the visits area, time permitting” (p.12). A similar procedure is to be followed where an application for special medical consideration has been approved allowing an adult visitor to use the toilet facilities during a visit.

When asked about their thoughts on visitor information, 28% of respondents reported that this was ‘poor’ or ‘non-existent’. More specifically, respondents commented on the lack of information for new visitors in relation to the visiting process (e.g. *“need more signs for new visitors”* and *“clearer signage about what you have to do”*), and the inconsistencies in, and currency of, available information (e.g. *“always get told different things from different security guards”* and *“signs are outdated”*).

Very little difference (approximately 4%) was found between the proportion of respondents who rated the furniture in the visiting area as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ and those who gave the furniture a rating of ‘poor’ or ‘non-existent’. There was an even smaller discrepancy (1.2%) between the proportions of ratings given to the drink/food machines (see Figure 10).

Facility	Non-existent/ Poor		Good/ Excellent	
	No.	%	No.	%
Furniture	181	29.9	205	33.8
Drink/Food Machine	185	30.5	192	31.7

**Table 3: Respondents' Rating of Furniture And Drink/Food Machine**

Comments about the furniture in the visiting area primarily focussed on the lack of availability and poor comfort of seating. For example;

- *“Not enough seats for all visitors”*
- *“Within the visiting area the metal chairs are highly uncomfortable. The tables are unsightly and filthy leaving me apprehensive about placing food on them”*
- *“Seating is a disgrace, no backs on chairs which are bolted to the ground so you have to bend to hear what each other are saying which create back problem”*
- *“Very uncomfortable chairs and too close to the next visitor, need more space”.*

The majority of comments about the drink/food machines related to the limited selection of food and drink available, in particular, the lack of healthy options. For example;

- *“I would like to see bottled water in the vending machines”*
- *“Machine needs more variety and healthier options”*
- *“Healthier options in food machine like juice for kids and sandwiches”*
- *“No adequate food for children only chocolates chips and fizzy drinks”*
- *“The vending machines are often broken and don't have a very good selection”*
- *“No good food machines - always out of order or empty”.*

Sheltered outdoor space received the poorest response with 40.1% (n=243) of respondents rating this as ‘non-existent’ or ‘poor’. That said, a further 147 (24.3%) of visitors rated the sheltered outdoor space as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Comments included;

- *“No seats or covered area when waiting for doors to open (no shelter from snow, wind etc.)”*
- *“Walk from reception to visit area is open so when it rains you're wet for the whole visit”*
- *“Would be good to have sheltered out door space”*
- *“There really needs to be a covered walkway where you queue”*
- *“No outdoor visiting options”*
- *“Would like shelters from the elements rain - extreme heat”.*

### **3.8 Facilities for Children**

While 7.9% of respondents did not respond, 37.3% reported that they brought children to visits.

When asked about the facilities for children at the prison, 39.3% reported them to be ‘fair’ or ‘good’ while 7.1% reported them to be ‘very good’ or ‘excellent. A further 26.1% however, reported the facilities for children to be ‘poor’ or ‘non-existent’, providing statements such as;

- *“Nothing in visiting area for children”*
- *“Facilities are not children friendly in any way”*
- *“Totally unsuitable for children”*
- *“It's not a good place for children to be. They get pretty bored waiting”*
- *“There is no play area for children”*

- *“There are a few books available for children, but some board games, colouring and/or other activities would be greatly appreciated to keep the children amused and able to interact with their father”.*

The remaining 27.6% of respondents did not answer this question.

### 3.9 Problems when Visiting

The most common problem when visiting, as reported by respondents, were distance travelled, limited visiting days or hours, and waiting time at the prison (41.7%, 36.5%, and 34% respectively sighted these as ‘often’ or ‘always’ a problem). Comments in relation to these areas included;

#### Travel distance and costs

- *“We travel 3 hours for 1 hour visit. Cost of petrol \$85 plus lunch is expensive”.*
- *“It costs approximately \$500 every month, due to distance travelled we would only be able to visit for one session, so we stay overnight and we do an afternoon and a morning visit, then travel home”.*

#### Limited visiting times

- *“Should have Saturday and Sunday visits to maintain family and friends contact with inmate”.*
- *“Wish we had week day visits - we can't do anything on the weekend except the visit”.*
- *“Would like more days - whatever time we spend is precious to us”.*

#### Waiting time at the prison

- *“The queuing system is disorganised, unless you arrive early”.*
- *“The office process is very slow and you miss half your visit”.*
- *“There should be a special time for people who have no problems and come regularly”.*

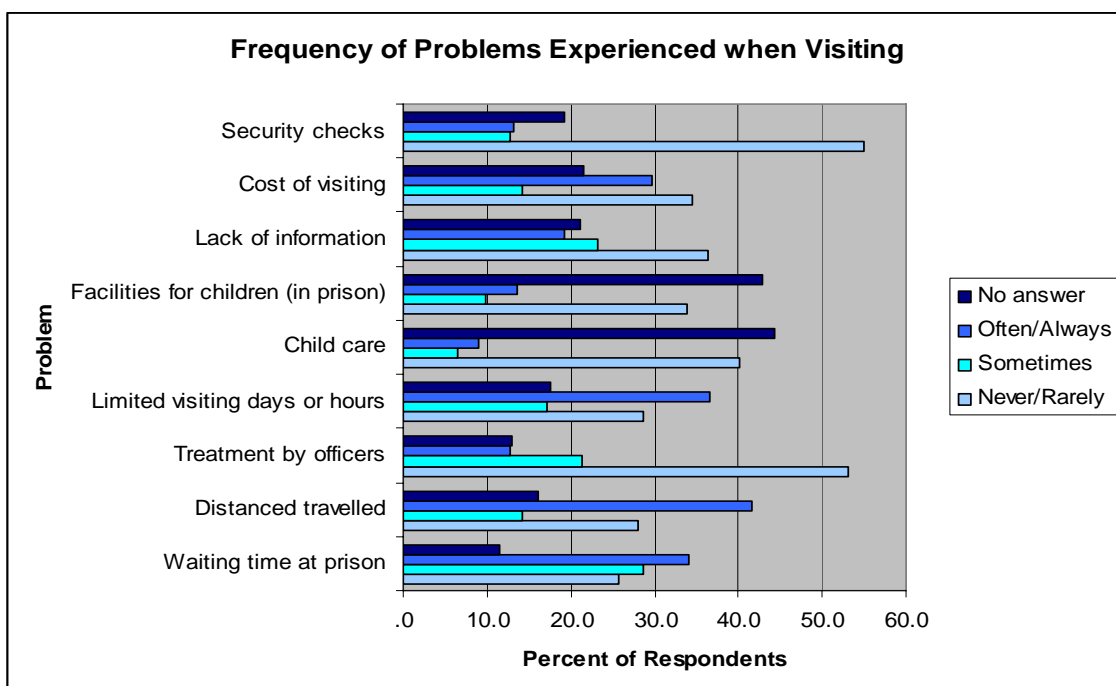


Figure 8: Respondents' Reports of Problems Experienced when Visiting

The least commonly sighted problems included security checks, treatment by officers, and child care (55%, 53%, and 40.2% respectively sighted these as 'never' or 'rarely' a problem), with some respondents reporting that *"staff are generally courteous and well-mannered"*, and acknowledging the need for security checks (*"I do not have a problem with the security. It is needed to protect inmate and visitors. Most times they are polite, quick and efficient"*).

Those respondents who did cite these areas as 'problems' when visiting, provided the following comments;

#### Security checks

- *"Security check takes far too long... are too slow and inefficient...and equipment not effective to process quickly"*
- *"Security checks make me feel like the prisoner"*
- *"Security checks are draining (weekly) when you know you have nothing to hide - especially traumatic for kids".*

#### Treatment by officers

- *"Your treatment of the public is a disgrace".*
- *"Staff are rude".*
- *"Treatment by some officers is very good but most treat you as if you were the prisoner".*
- *"Sometimes we feel the officers enjoy the authority they have over visitors. Mostly we have done no wrong".*
- *"The worker's are so rude and grumpy always and they yell if you don't understand something".*
- *"Officers are often rude and treat visitors badly and speak to prisoners like they are animals and it is wrong".*
- *"While I realise my son has committed a crime and needs to pay for this, I haven't and do not appreciate the rude, arrogant and sarcastic manner and attitude with which I have been dealt with by 3 Corrections Officers on 3 different occasions".*
- *"It depends which officers are on duty as to whether this whole experience is a positive one".*
- *"Sometimes the officers treat visitors in a demeaning way. They should have more compassion given it is a difficult situation when someone you love is in prison".*
- *"There have been many times where officers mistreat, verbally abuse and make very rude remarks to the visitors of inmates".*

'Other' problems experienced when visiting included poor cleanliness (*"Dirty carpets, windows, general environment, poor standard overall"*, *"Very filthy inside the visit centre"*, and *"Toilet area has no hygiene for after hand washing"*) and the inconsistency of rules (e.g. *"Different officers have different rules and there is no set standard - it's whatever the officer says on the day"* and *"Some guards are more strict then others. Shouldn't they all be the same"*).

### 3.10 "Visiting a Correctional Centre" Handbook

Two hundred and three (33.5%) visitors reported having seen a copy of the "Visiting a Correctional Centre" handbook, and 158 (26.1%) reported that it was 'helpful'.

The main issue raised about the “Visiting a Correctional Centre” handbook related to the generic nature of the information provided, with one respondent stating that *“it was just a ‘one size fits all’ and many things are not covered”*. Visitors suggested that *“each centre needs their own booklet as they are all different and have different rules”*. Others suggested that the handbook needs to include visiting times for each centre.

### 3.11 Rating of Overall Visiting Experience

Overall, the majority of respondents rated their visiting experience as ‘satisfactory’ (26.1%) or ‘good’ (22.9%). A further 17% rated their visiting experience as ‘very good’ while 15.3% rated their experience as ‘not good’. 37 respondents (6.1%) did not answer this question.



Figure 9: Respondents' Overall Rating of Visiting Experience

A variety of both positive and negative comments in relation to respondents' overall visiting experience were received. As expected, comments varied depending on the correctional centre the respondent was visiting.

Many of the comments and suggestions made by respondents have been outlined in the previous sections of the report. As such, the following common themes were reiterated; limited selection of food available in visiting areas, poor facilities (with specific reference to toilets, child facilities, and sheltered outdoor areas), lack of access to toilets during visits, lengthy processing times, limited visiting hours, poor treatment by officers, and the provision of inconsistent information and procedures.

While a number of respondents indicated that their overall visiting experience differed “depending on who was in charge of visits”, approximately one-quarter of respondents provided positive comments in relation to their interactions with staff, acknowledging how officers' attitudes towards them makes their visiting experience more enjoyable.

Some such comments included;

- *“Its an emotional time for us, the officers have always been extremely helpful.”*
- *“Staff at (correctional centre) are always friendly and helpful which make a bad experience bearable”.*
- *“I know staff have to deal with difficult people but some treat us as we are all the same. Most are polite and it makes a difference”.*
- *“Atmosphere is relaxed. Staff are friendly and genuine”.*
- *“The staff are the best...they make us feel like family”.*
- *“Friendly, helpful staff. They don't judge you because your visiting a prisoner. They actually smile and make an unpleasant situation more comfortable”.*
- *“Your staff make up for the faults in the system”.*
- *“The experience of visiting a prison can be very harrowing for children but the kindness of (officer) has been extraordinary and made such a difference to my children”.*

## 4. Discussion

### **Limitations**

Due to the low response rate, caution should be exercised in the interpretation and application of the results of this study. In addition, as a result of the use of saturation sampling, whereby the survey was made available to any visitor, respondents' self-selection may have resulted in skewed findings. As noted in the previous study (McHutchison, 2000), “respondents may differ in characteristics and /or experience from those visitors who did not respond” (p. 20). It could be argued, for example, that only those visitors with extreme views made the effort to provide comments, resulting in an overall negative or positive set of responses.

In addition, due to the assumed literacy required in the completion of the survey, visitors with English as a second language, or literacy issues, may have been deterred from completing a survey. As such, their comments and suggestions may not have been collected.

Further to this, due to the small number of responses received from each individual correctional centre, findings have been reported collectively. As such, while the results provide a general overview of the level of satisfaction of visitors to correctional centres across NSW, they do not identify satisfaction levels or concerns relating to any particular centre. Furthermore, as was the case in the previous two studies, the overall results are likely to be biased towards responses relating to those centres where the numbers of respondents were greatest.

Limitations and cautionary notes aside, it should be acknowledged that the comments and concerns of over 600 visitors to NSW correctional centres have been outlined in this report. As stated previously, “visitors are stakeholders in jail policies” (Sturges & Al-Khattar, 2009, p.495) and it is, therefore, essential that any one of their opinions in relation to their visiting experience be considered.

### **Who responded?**

One of the aims of this report was to provide background information about visitors, including their age, gender, and relationship to the inmate they are visiting.



It is interesting to note that those responding to the current survey reported similar demographic characteristics to those responding to the surveys conducted by Eyland (1996) and McHutchison (2000). For example,

- the majority of respondents reported that they were born in Australia (76%, 78% and 77% in 1994, 1999, and 2011 respectively);
- approximately three-quarters of respondents were female (73%, 68% and 74% in 1994, 1999, and 2011 respectively);
- approximately one-third of respondents reported caring for at least one child (41%, 38% and 34% in 1994, 1999, and 2011 respectively); and
- respondents ranged in age from child to mid-80s, with their average age being in the mid 40s; and
- the highest proportion of respondents reported that they were visiting their 'son or daughter' (28%, 30% and 23% in 1994, 1999, and 2011 respectively).

A slightly higher proportion of respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the current study (11%) compared to the earlier studies (6% in 1994 and 7% in 1999).

While all studies reported similar demographics in their sample, it is difficult to make comparisons with either the Eyland (1996) study or the McHutchison (2000) study, as it is unclear as to whether these similarities indicate that respondents are reflective of a representative sample of visitors, whether they are reflective of the type of visitor most likely to respond to such a survey, or whether they are, in fact, coincidental.

### ***Views and opinions***

In addition to a demographic profile of visitors, this report aimed to reflect the views, opinions, and visiting experiences expressed by visitors to NSW correctional centres.

There were seven key areas of concern that were identified by visitors. Interestingly, the concerns raised by respondents in the current study are similar to those raised in the two previous studies, as well as those conducted in other jurisdictions. These areas included:

- travel distance and costs;
- visiting days and hours;
- waiting and processing time;
- facilities in the visiting areas;
- facilities for children;
- reliable and consistent information; and
- treatment by staff.

#### *Travel distance and costs*

The most common form of transport reported to be used by visitors to attend visits was their own car/bike (80.2%). As Eyland (1996) stated, this may reflect the reality that correctional centres are not easily accessible by public transport.

Travelling time ranged from 2 minutes to 30 hours, with the most frequent travel time reported by respondents being 2 hours.

Travel distance and cost was the most common ‘problem’ cited by respondents to the current survey with 42% of respondents referring to these as ‘often’ or ‘always’ a problem for them. Comments indicate that the majority of those who regard this as an issue are those travelling to regional correctional centres. As only 14% of respondents reported that they were aware of CSNSW’s Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, it may be beneficial to further promote this scheme to those visiting correctional centres in regional areas.

#### *Visiting days and hours*

Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported limited visiting days and hours as ‘often’ or ‘always’ a problem when visiting. While only 26% of respondents noted that visiting times or days were not suitable, comments suggested contradictory responses with little agreement in relation to what times and days were regarded as ‘suitable’. Similar findings were reported by Eyland (1996) with those visiting correctional centres that limited visits to weekends reporting that week day visits would be more suitable, and those visiting correctional centres that limited visits to weekdays reporting that weekend visits would be more suitable.

Unfortunately, as stated by Eyland (1996), visitors may need to schedule visiting in around their everyday life – employment, school, child care, social activities, etc. In order to overcome this issue, the overarching suggestion from respondents was to facilitate visiting “7 days per week” or at least allow some flexibility in visiting times.

#### *Waiting and processing time*

Waiting time and processing time was the third most commonly cited issue encountered during visits, with 34% of respondents stating that this was ‘often’ or ‘always’ a problem.

Approximately three-quarters of the respondents reported arriving at the correctional centre, on average, half an hour before scheduled visiting hours. As with the survey conducted by Eyland (1996), the most common response given as to why they did so was to maximise the visiting time (by avoiding queues and reducing processing time).

While 12 respondents reported that they did not usually have to wait to see the prisoner they are visiting once visiting hours had started, the average waiting time reported was 27 minutes, with three-quarters of the respondents reporting that they usually commenced their visit within half an hour of visiting hours starting.

Unfortunately, 12% of respondents reported waiting over an hour for their visit to commence. While it is unclear as to what the cause of such lengthy delays was on these occasions, possible reasons for delays include processing and security issues, or the inmate failing to respond to the announcement of a visit.

While the majority of respondents (53%) reported having “no” problems with any of the security measures, a number did complain about malfunctions with detection units delaying the commencement of their visits.

Further delays, which result during the security processing of visitors, occur as a result of the lack of networking in required information technology. Firstly, the Offender Intergrated Management System (OIMS) and Biometric Identification Device (BID) are not linked. This results in the processing officer having to verify the visitor’s identity on both systems independently. Secondly, the BIDs for each correctional centre are not networked throughout NSW. As such, visitors are required to undergo the initial processes of having their fingerprints and images captured at each centre they visit. Linking the OIMS and BID systems and networking the BID statewide could reduce this additional layer of processing and time delay.

### *Facilities in the visiting areas*

Overall the rating of facilities in visiting areas was generally positive, with the majority of items rated as 'good' or 'excellent' by the highest proportion of respondents (see Appendix 4).

A relatively high proportion<sup>4</sup> of respondents rated the lockers, temperature, space, disabled access, waiting areas, and visitor carpark as 'good' or 'excellent' compared to the proportion of those who rated these facilities as 'poor' or 'non-existent'.

Conversely, a relatively high proportion of respondents rated sheltered outdoor space as 'poor' or 'non-existent' when compared to the proportion of those who rated this as 'good' or 'excellent'. In fact, sheltered outdoor space received the poorest response with 40% of respondents rating this as 'non-existent' or 'poor'. While this was an issue raised by respondents in the Eyland (1996) study, it would appear that the funding has not been directed to the provision of adequate shelter in the visiting areas of a number of correctional centres throughout NSW as yet.

Other facilities causing the high levels of concern (i.e. over 25% of respondents provided a rating of 'poor' or 'non-existent') included; drink/food machine and tea/coffee facilities (31% rated as 'poor' or 'non-existent'), furniture (30% rated as 'poor' or 'non-existent'), and toilets (28% rated as 'poor' or 'non-existent').

The majority of comments about the drink/food machines related to the limited selection of food and drink available, in particular, the lack of healthy options. Similarly, comments in relation to tea and coffee facilities referred to the poor availability.

In relation to the furniture in the visiting area, respondents' comments primarily focussed on the lack of availability and poor comfort of seating.

Comments about the toilets in the visiting area related primarily to poor hygiene and availability or access. In order to ensure accountability in relation to the maintenance and cleanliness of the toilets (and other facilities) it is recommended that supervision of this requirement be incorporated into the General Managers' performance agreement in order to ensure adherence to minimum hygiene standards.

As stated previously, the CSNSW procedures manual (2011) states that, children and in certain circumstances, adults, should be permitted to use the toilets during a visit, and that a visit should continue after a visitor has been allowed to use the toilet, "conditional upon re-screening prior to re-entry into the visiting facility" (p.12). While this is stated in the procedures manual, it would appear that this has not been occurring at a number of correctional centres. This may be as a result of high numbers of visitors and limited time of staff to re-process visitors.

### *Facilities for children*

While 37% of respondents reported that they brought children to visits, 46% stated that the facilities for children at the prison were 'fair', 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Of those who thought the facilities to be 'poor' or 'non-existent', the main area of concern was that there was nothing suitable to occupy the children while they were waiting and nowhere for them to play once they went into a visit. This in turn may result in the child becoming bored and disruptive during the visit. As stated by McHutchison (2000) "it is

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<sup>4</sup> This comparison was based on a difference of more than 15% between the proportion of respondents rating the facility as 'good' or 'excellent' and the proportion of respondents rating the facility as 'poor' or 'non-existent'.

essential, if the visit is to be a positive one for all concerned, that the children are reasonable content during the visit and not disruptive to those around them” (p. 20).

Furthermore, as visiting has been found to be beneficial in sustaining and maintaining the bond between children and their incarcerated parent, and alleviating both the child’s and the inmate’s anxiety about each other’s wellbeing, it would seem reasonable for visiting areas to provide more facilities for children. As recommended by McHutchison (2000), where financial resources permit, consideration should be given to the provision of play areas (indoors and/or outdoors) for children of visitors. In addition, given the reported waiting times, activities could be made available to occupy children while in the waiting area, such as children’s DVDs and books.

As visitation by family and friends has also been found to have a positive affect on the reintegration and recidivism rates of inmates, it should be considered an important component of an inmates’ case management. As such, it would seem appropriate for the Manager of Services and Programs within each correctional centre to also take on a degree of the responsibility for ensuring the visiting section in their centre is equipped with appropriate facilities for both visiting adults and their children.

#### *Reliable and consistent information*

As cited by Eyland (1996), Schwartz and Weintraub (1974) raised the issue about the lack of information available to inmates’ family members about prison visits, almost 40 years ago, with Jorgensen, Hernandez and Warren (1986, cited in Eyland, 1996) later arguing that family members, in fact, receive such a large amount of information, some of which is confusing and/or inaccurate, that they may as well not receive any, as they are unable to decipher which parts are accurate and which parts are not.

Similar to the proportion reported by Eyland (1996), over one-quarter of respondents to the current survey reported that visitor information was ‘poor’ or ‘non-existent’. More specifically, respondents commented on the lack of information for new visitors in relation to the visiting process, and the inconsistencies in, and currency of, information made available to visitors.

In response to recommendations made by Eyland (1996), CSNSW developed a general visitors’ handbook. Unfortunately, only one-third of respondents to the current survey reported having seen a copy of the current “Visiting a Correctional Centre” handbook. Furthermore, only one-quarter of respondents reported that it was ‘helpful’.

As with the visitor information generally, the main issue raised about the handbook related to its generic nature, with differences between correctional centres not being covered. Visitors, in fact, suggested that each correctional centre should have their own section in the Visiting Handbook, outlining location specific visiting times, procedures, and permitted items.

In order to improve the dissemination of information to new visitors, it may also be beneficial to allocate a dedicated processing line for first time visitors where information can be provided without delaying the processing of regular visitors. It may also be valuable to enlist a visitor liaison or customer service officer, in correctional centre waiting areas where numbers of visitors are large, in order to assist new visitors and explain processes or offer information to reduce anxiety while waiting for the visit.

#### *Treatment by staff*

While more than half (53%) of the respondents cited treatment by officers as ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ a problem they encountered when visiting a correctional centre, over 30% of other reported it to be a problem ‘sometimes’, ‘often’, or ‘always’.

These results indicate that a good proportion of CSNSW staff are consistently adhering to the CSNSW Visitors Customer Service Charter, however there may still a small number who are not.

As recommended by both Eyland (1996) and McHutchison (2000), the Corrective Services Academy does offer training programs in customer service. While this should be mandatory for all staff, it is of utmost importance for correctional officers working in the visits areas. As such, it is recommended that all staff complete customer service training as part of their induction program, with a refresher being required prior to being rostered in the visiting area. The completion of this training should be overseen by the Officer-in-Charge of visits.

In addition to their completion of training, the ongoing behaviour of staff should be monitored by the Officer-in-Charge of visits, with any complaints or inappropriate behaviour addressed and brought to the attention of the General Manager.

As stated by McHutchison (2000), the difficulty for correctional officers working in visits sections must be emphasised. "They have onerous security and administrative responsibilities. Yet whilst carrying out these duties, visits staff have to deal with a large volume of people who may be stressed, impatient, tired from their journey and not always cooperative" (McHutchison, 2000, p.22). As such, it may be appropriate, as recommended by McHutchison (2000), that "the value of replacing correctional officers with clerical staff in performing administrative tasks related to visitor processing" be investigated (p. viii). As McHutchison (2000) notes, this would enable correctional officers to concentrate on the security matters related to visitor processing. While potentially reducing processing time, replacing custodial staff with civilian staff at the initial point of entry for visitors may also reduce the visitors' feelings of intimidation, and potential hostility between visitors and those they may perceive to be preventing the liberty of their family member.

### ***Concluding comments***

While it is difficult to compare the current study with either the Eyland (1996) study or the McHutchison (2000) study, as it is unclear as to whether the respondents of any of these studies are reflective of a representative sample of visitors, it is clear from the results of the present study that, for families and friends visiting inmates in NSW correctional centres, a number of key issues remain unaddressed – "issues which cause significant levels of difficulty and stress for people already in a difficult and stressful situation" (Begg, 2002, p.12).

"Because visitors are stakeholders in jail policies, it is imperative that jail administrators consider their perspectives relevant to visitation policies that affect them" (Sturges & Al-Khattar, 2009, p.495). To address the needs of visitors to NSW correctional centres, attention should be given to; expanding visiting hours to accommodate visitors who are employed or have to travel long distances, providing relevant and accurate information to visitors, making sure that visitation rooms are clean and comfortable, providing child-friendly facilities, providing shelter from the elements, training staff, and reducing administrative processing time.

By addressing these issues, through the relatively minimal cost of revising policies and maintaining existing facilities, the visiting experience may be enhanced, encouraging visitors to visit their family member more frequently, and those who do not visit to begin visiting. This increase in visiting and maintaining contact with family may, in turn, reduce stress in inmates and their family members, promote inmates' mental health, improve management of inmates, decrease recidivism, and ultimately increase public safety.

## 5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to improve the provision of service delivery to visitors of inmates in correctional centres across New South Wales.

### 1. Accountability

- 1.1. Key performance measures to be incorporated into General Managers' performance agreement in order to ensure accountability for service provision and adherence to guidelines and service charter.
- 1.2. The Manager of Services and Programs within each correctional centre should be given more responsibility to ensure the visiting section in their centre is managed in accordance with policy and procedures.

### 2. Children of Visitors

- 2.1. Where financial resources permit, considerations should be given to the provision of play areas (indoors and/or outdoors) for children of visitors.
- 2.2. Activities should be made available to occupy children while in the waiting area (e.g. children's DVDs, books, etc.).

### 3. Facilities

- 3.1. Vending machines should incorporate healthy options of food and drink.
- 3.2. General Managers should maintain a record of expenditure of monies earned through vending machines in the visits area to improve the facilities in the area.
- 3.3. Toilets should be made available for visitors (and their children) to use during visits, without having to terminate their visit.
- 3.4. Maintenance and cleanliness of the toilet and other facilities within the visiting section of correctional centres should be incorporated into the General Managers' performance agreement in order to ensure adherence to minimum hygiene standards.

### 4. Visiting Procedures

- 4.1. Duties should be separated with civilian staff processing visitors, in particular in centres with a high number of visitors, and correctional staff conducting security checks.
- 4.2. A dedicated processing line for new (first time) visitors should be allocated in order to provide information on the process (induction) and set up VIN and biometric identification without delaying the processing of regular visitors.

### 5. Information Technology

- 5.1. Link Biometric Identification Device (BID) and Offender Integrated Management System (OIMS).
- 5.2. Network Biometric Identification Devices (BID) statewide.

**6. Staff Training**

- 6.1. All staff should complete customer service training as part of their induction program, with a refresher prior to being rostered in the visiting area.

**7. Provision of Information**

- 7.1. Visitor liaison or customer service officer should be available, in correctional centre waiting areas where numbers are large, in order to assist new visitors and explain processes or offer information to reduce anxiety while waiting for the visit.
- 7.2. Each correctional centre should develop their own information pamphlet for inclusion in the Visiting Handbook, outlining location specific visiting times, procedures, permitted items, etc.

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## Appendix 1: Visitor Survey Form



# Prison Visitors Survey Have Your Say .....

## Corrective Services NSW

Throughout the month of April 2011, Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) is surveying people who visit inmates in NSW correctional centres.

The survey will help CSNSW to provide better services for family and friends visiting people in custody.

Survey responses are strictly confidential and cannot be used to identify any individual.

The information collected will help us to understand the needs of visitors and asks for your opinion about your experiences when visiting people in custody.

CSNSW recognises that there are great benefits to be gained if relationships between inmates and their friends and family are maintained and strengthened through regular visits.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Corporate Research, Evaluation and Statistics on (02) 8346 1549, or email [research.enquiries@dcs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:research.enquiries@dcs.nsw.gov.au)

Once you have completed the survey, please place it in the box labelled "VISITOR SURVEY" located in the Visits Area, or place it in the available self addressed envelope (no postage stamp required). If sending via pre-paid envelope please complete and send no later than 30 April 2011.

You can also complete this survey online at -

[www.correctiveservices.nsw.gov.au/survey](http://www.correctiveservices.nsw.gov.au/survey)

## Maintaining the Link

Centre Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Name the Correctional Centre you are visiting \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use Only

**Thinking only of this prison and the prisoner you visit most often**

1. What is your relationship to this prisoner?

- a. My husband/ de facto partner       d. My wife/de facto partner       g. Friend   
 b. My boyfriend/girlfriend       e. My brother/sister   
 c. My son/daughter       f. Mother/Father   
 Other (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_

1.

2. When you visit this prisoner, how often is it because....

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
	1	2	3	4	5	
The prisoner has requested it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.1 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
To stay in touch/maintain relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.2 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Companionship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.3 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Business matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.4 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss family matters/problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss prisoner's problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.6 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss my personal problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.7 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Keep the family together/children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.8 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you *usually* travel to the prison?

- Own car/bike       Walk       Lift with friends       Public transport  
 Public transport plus taxi       C.R.C. bus

3.

Other (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_

4. How long is the travelling time *one way*? \_\_\_\_\_

4.

5. On *average*, how long are your visits? \_\_\_\_\_

5.

6. Do you usually arrive before scheduled visiting hours?      Yes       No

6.

If yes, why \_\_\_\_\_

How long before scheduled visiting hours? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Once the scheduled visiting hours have started, how long do you usually have to wait until you can see the prisoner you are visiting? \_\_\_\_\_

7.

8. On average, how often do you visit this prisoner?

8.

- 2 or 3 times a week       Once a week       2 or 3 times a month  
 Once a month       Once or twice a year       Less than once a year

9. How long have you been visiting this prisoner in prison? \_\_\_\_\_

9.

10. Do you bring children to the visits?      Yes       No

10.

11. Are the facilities for children at the prison...

- Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor       Non-existent

11.

## Maintaining the Link

12. Thinking about your visits, how are the following?

	Excellent 1	Good 2	Fair 3	Poor 4	Non-existent 5
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lockers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Temperature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drink/food machine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tea/coffee facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sheltered outdoor space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor car park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_

13. Have you ever been turned away from a visit? Yes  No

14. What were the reasons for being turned away?

Inappropriate footwear

Inappropriate dress

Other  (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_

15. Are these problems when visiting?

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
Waiting time at prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distance travelled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Treatment by officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited visiting days or hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities for children (in prison)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost of visiting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Security checks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_

16. Does this prison have a telephone booking system? Yes  No

Are these issues when using the system

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
Waiting time on phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
System is busy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
System rings out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficult to make booking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other problems (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_

17. Are there visiting times or days which are not suitable? Yes  No

If yes, why \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use Only		
12.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Maintaining the Link**

18. Are you and your family treated politely by Corrective Services staff when you visit this prison?  
 1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Never     Rarely     Sometimes     Often     Always

19. Did you encounter any of the following security procedures during your visits?

Drug detection dogs     Walk through     Hand held     Facial scanning   
 metal detectors                      metal detectors  
 Iris scanning     Any other security measure (please detail) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have any problems with these? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

20. Have you used a video-visit system for a family member or friend in prison?    Yes     No   
 If yes, why did you use a video-visit?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

21. Are you aware of the Travel and Accommodation Assistance scheme for visitors to prison?  
 Yes                       No

If yes, have you ever applied for assistance?    Yes     No   
 Were you successful in obtaining assistance?    Yes     No

22. Have you seen a copy of the "Visiting a Correctional Centre" handbook?    Yes     No   
 If yes, was it helpful?    Yes     No   
 If no, why was it not helpful? \_\_\_\_\_

23. Some details about you:

a. Male                       Female                       b. Age \_\_\_\_\_ years  
 c. Your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_  
 d. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?    Yes     No   
 e. Are you caring for any children?                      Yes     No   
 If yes, for how many? \_\_\_\_\_ Age of youngest child? \_\_\_\_\_ Age of oldest child? \_\_\_\_\_

24. How many prisoners have you visited in the last month? (Not just in this prison) \_\_\_\_\_

25. How would you rate the overall visiting experience at this prison?

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Satisfactory     Not Good   
 Why? Please Comment  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use Only	
18.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
19.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
19.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
19.3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
20.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
20.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
21.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
21.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
21.3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
22.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
22.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
22.3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.a	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.b	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.c	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.d	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.e	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.g	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.h	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
23.i	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
24.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
25.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
25.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

THANK YOU for your time and assistance in completing this survey.

**Appendix 2: Visitor Survey Response by Correctional Centre (listed alphabetically)**

Correctional Centre	Survey Forms Returned	Online Responses	Total Surveys Received
Bathurst Correctional Centre	2	9	11
Berrima Correctional Centre	15	1	16
Brewarrina Correctional Centre	-	-	-
Broken Hill Correctional Centre	11	-	11
Cessnock Correctional Centre	17	2	19
Compulsory Drug Treatment Centre	1	-	1
Cooma Correctional Centre	5	-	5
Dawn de Loas	5	6	11
Dillwynia Correctional Centre	-	3	3
Emu Plains Correctional Centre	16	3	19
Glen Innes Correctional Centre	11	1	12
Goulburn Correctional Centre (incl HRMU)	30	3	33
Grafton Correctional Centre	2	3	5
Ivanhoe Correctional Centre	3	-	3
John Morony Correctional Centre	-	9	9
Junee Correctional Centre	46	6	52
Kariong Correctional Centre	1	-	1
Kirkconnell Correctional Centre	-	6	6
Lithgow Correctional Centre	45	7	52
Long Bay Hospital	22	-	22
Mannus Correctional Centre	8	1	9
Metropolitan Remand & Reception Centre	18	5	23
Metropolitan Special Programs Centre	53	-	53
Mid North Coast Correctional Centre	33	1	34
Oberon Correctional Centre	7	-	7
Outer Metro Multi Purpose Centre	-	1	1
Parklea Correctional Centre	29	10	39
Parramatta Correctional Centre	1	-	1
St Heliers Correctional Centre	1	1	2
Silverwater Correctional Centre	10	5	15
Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre	37	7	44
South Coast Correctional Centre	22	6	28
Special Purpose Centre	4	-	4
Tamworth Correctional Centre	3	8	11
Wellington Correctional Centre	37	2	39
Unknown	5	-	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>606</b>

## Appendix 3: CSNSW's Visitor Customer Service Charter



### Welcome

To ensure your visit is pleasant, you can help the Department by:

- abiding by the legislative requirements and organisational guidelines that are in force;
- providing information that is complete and accurate; and
- advising Departmental staff of any changes to your personal information.

The Department will:

- ensure that you are treated in a professional manner, consistent with fairness, courtesy and sensitivity;
- ensure that all your personal information is treated in confidence;
- endeavour to address your needs and expectations within reason;
- be positive and helpful and provide reasons for any decisions made.

### Quality Service

The Department is committed to providing you with the opportunity to continue and strengthen your relationships with family and friends. In doing so, the Department will:

- provide you with maximum access to members of your family and friends;
- provide a relaxed, friendly and comfortable visiting facility;
- conduct visiting hours within advertised times, except where matters of security and staffing require variation to these times;
- provide reasonable facilities for the storage of valuable property;
- provide children friendly facilities;
- provide facilities for disabled visitors;
- ensure that you are treated in a professional manner, consistent with fairness, courtesy and sensitivity;
- ensure that all your personal information is treated in confidence;
- try to address your needs and expectations.

### Information

Staff of the Department will:

- maintain accurate and up-to-date information on rules and regulations for visits;
- ensure appropriate guidelines are followed when it provides the above information and advice;
- make its forms easy for you to provide the information it needs to assist you with visiting.

### Feedback

The Department welcomes your comments and complaints and will ensure that:

- it is receptive and responsive to complaints and feedback;
- all your complaints are treated seriously;
- it will meet agreed deadlines for the completion of your enquiry or the resolution of your complaint.



## Appendix 4: Respondents' Ratings of Facilities

Facility	Non-existent/ Poor		Fair		Good/ Excellent		Missing		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Toilets	168	27.7	177	29.2	212	35.0	49	8.1	606	100
Lockers	55	9.1	139	22.9	357	58.9	55	9.1	606	100
Furniture	181	29.9	168	27.7	205	33.8	52	8.6	606	100
Temperature	117	19.3	190	31.4	241	39.8	58	9.6	606	100
Space	107	17.7	185	30.5	235	38.8	79	13.0	606	100
Disabled access	99	16.3	139	22.9	199	32.8	169	27.9	606	100
Waiting area	123	20.3	202	33.3	220	36.3	61	10.1	606	100
Drink/food machine	185	30.5	167	27.6	192	31.7	62	10.2	606	100
Tea/coffee facilities	188	31.0	151	24.9	189	31.2	78	12.9	606	100
Sheltered outdoor space	243	40.1	129	21.3	147	24.3	87	14.4	606	100
Visitor carpark	147	24.3	123	20.3	274	45.2	62	10.2	606	100
Visitor information	171	28.2	149	24.6	214	35.3	72	11.9	606	100







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